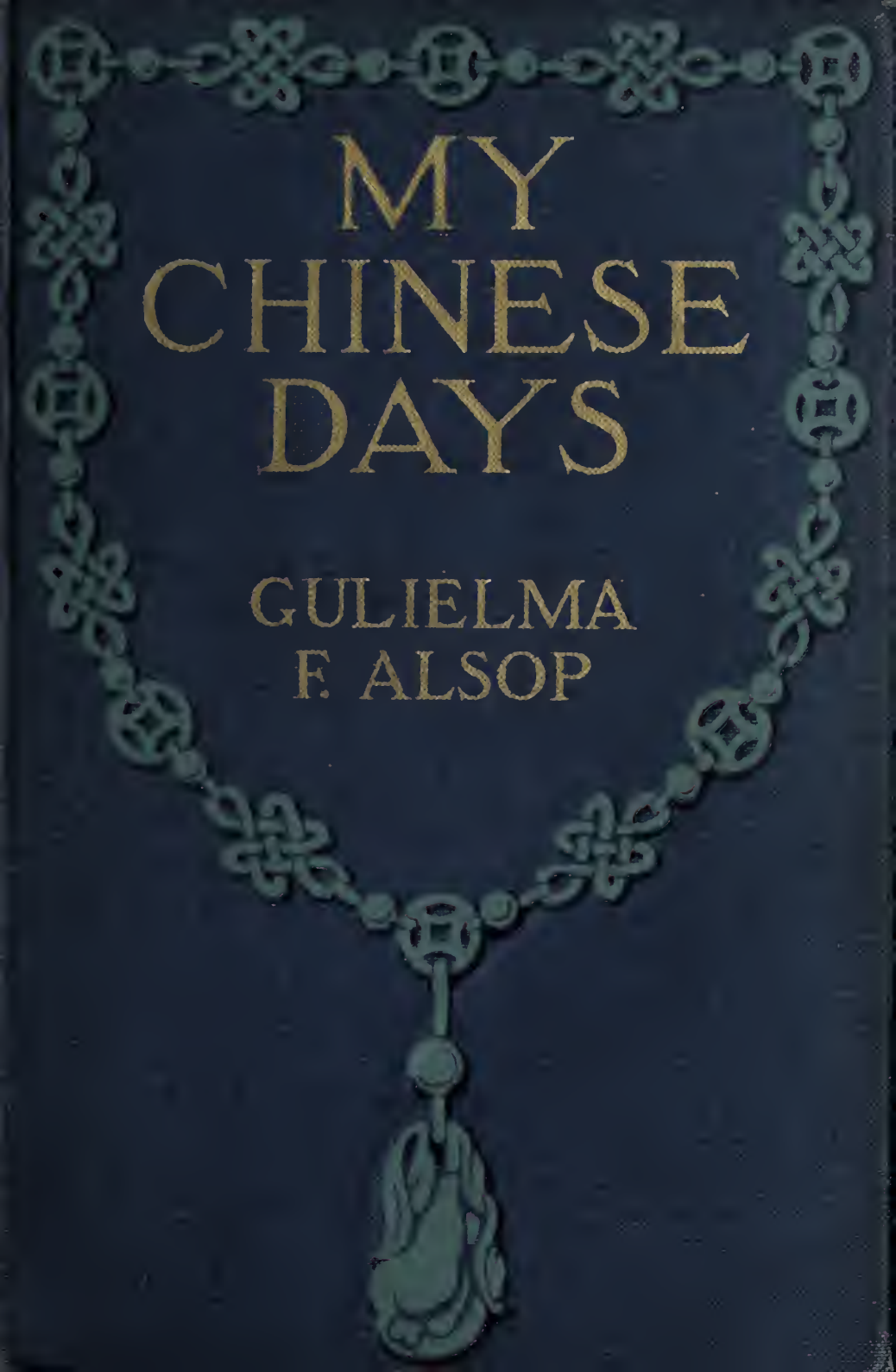
MY CHINESE DAYS

GULIELMA F. ALSOP



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GULIELMA F. ALSOP

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To My Father

PREFACE

REACHING China in a moment of great dramatic importance, in fact on the very day that the Peace Delegation arrived in Shanghai, in 1911, I found from the very first all the events and happenings in my daily life and in the lives of those about me charged with a vital significance.

In the story of Doctor Wilhelmina I have endeavored to give the impressions and readjustments that take place in a missionary doctor in present-day China. Some of the incidents, in especial the rescue of the slave girls at Kaung Wan, are borrowed from the heroism of acquaintances, but the great majority happened under my very eyes.

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MY CHINESE DAYS

I

THE MANDARIN'S BRIDE

I HAD been in Shanghai one week and was comfortably settled in my study and bedroom but my mode of life was still strange to me and I was invariably startled by the appearance of a handsome, black-haired, blue-gowned man called "the boy", whenever I rang for a maid. The "Ladies' House", as the woman's dormitory was called, was directly opposite St. Margaret's Hospital, where I was to work for the rest of my appointed lifetime.

St. Margaret's is a Mission Hospital for Chinese women and children. The nurses, too, are Chinese. In their uniforms of light blue trousers and jackets and white aprons, I thought them very neat and jaunty. They are quick and agile, and move with more freedom than our many-skirted women. None of them have bound feet.

About six o'clock, Doctor Donnellon, the physician in charge, was called out to the country on an urgent case. As she gathered up her wraps, she said to me, "I am sorry to leave you so soon, but I hope you will have a quiet night. If you need anything,

remember that A-doo is the best nurse. She speaks a little English. You had better sleep in my room in order to hear the night bell."

"When will you be back?" I asked, following her to the door.

"I can't say. Some time to-morrow," she answered.

She stepped into her ricksha, and the wild-haired coolie burst into a run and whisked her out of sight around the wall of the compound.

I went back and finished my dinner with the other women — two evangelists and three teachers. I felt a slight tingling in my veins, as a swimmer does on the brink of a plunge into water of an unguessable temperature. The desultory talk of the table flowed around me unnoticed; I was wondering what the coming night would bring forth, so much of the true physician's attitude had I absorbed in the three years since my graduation. Everything happens at night.

The hospital was quiet when I made the rounds at nine o'clock. The outlines of the patients were mere formless lumps under their "bi-deus" of padded cotton. I opened windows right and left, pulled the covers from the children's noses, and returned to the house. Overhead, the stars were brilliant and brightly opalescent. The upcurling eaves of the Chinese houses huddling around the compound cut sharply against the steely-blue of the sky. The broad palm leaves clashed softly against each other like cymbals.

The feeling of the night grew upon me, as I

crouched on a low stool over the fire. One by one, the other women went to bed. The Chinese servants ceased their chatter. From the street I heard the click of the watchman's castanets as he struck them together on his rounds. Once, a sudden burst of sound leapt out upon the quiet night, like the wild upflaring of a hidden fire, and died away in faint reverberations.

The gaudy yellow flames that had raced between the irregular lumps of shining black coal changed to dim, flickering wraiths of blue, hovering over crimson embers. I forgot my anticipations in dreams: I fancied the tiny, twisting flames were the imprisoned ghosts of past ages, freed by the devastating fire.

Suddenly the night bell, a huge, metallic alarm hung over Doctor Donnellon's bed, rang sharply. Half bewildered by its vicious clangor, I started up and threw open the shutters. The two night nurses, in outer garments of fur, and five men, stood on the steps. The bright starlight shone on their pallid faces and dark, inscrutable eyes.

"What do you want?" I called in Chinese.

To my relief, a voice answered in pidgin English.

"Come quick. Makee baby."

"All right," I answered, almost disappointed that nothing more than an ordinary baby case awaited me. I dressed hurriedly and stole out of the sleeping house. The group on the steps was talking excitedly.

Merely as a formality, I asked, "Is the woman in the hospital?"

One of the men stepped forward. He was promiscuously dressed in a foreign felt hat, tan leather shoes, and a blue, brocaded, satin gown lined with lamb's wool.

"Woman no can come," he explained. "She too muchee sick. Two days, wantchee burn one baby, no can burn."

"Burn a baby!" I cried, with a start of horror, remembering all the weird tales of Chinese cruelty I had heard within the past week.

But in a rapid, voluble mixture of pidgin and Chinese, the man explained what he wanted. My heart sank, for I had no relish for the inky black alleys of Shanghai at midnight.

"More better, bring woman hospital-side," I urged.

"No can do," the man retorted. "She too muchee scare. She no savvey hospital. You come."

He laid a quick hand upon my arm and peered into my face. I liked his eyes and his earnestness, and some of my fear evaporated; I had done my "out" practice work in the polyglot slums of New York and Philadelphia, and knew the night and its calls. Yet I protested. Hospital results are so much superior.

"Cost very much outside," I answered. "I charge you twenty-five taels outside. Hospital side, only 30 dong-ban a day."

"Never mind," he answered proudly, "Can do. You come. Woman already eatee too muchee bitterness."

Turning to the men behind him, he explained our conversation in quick idiomatic jerks. Each man picked up a corner of his satin robe to reach the money pocket in his belt. Between them, in the brilliant starlight, they counted out to me thirty-four silver, Mexican dollars, the equivalent of the twenty-five taels I had charged.

"Now come," the spokesman said.

I acquiesced, and sent for A-doo, the best nurse, to accompany me. The surgical bag with its sterile instruments, chloroform, and dressings, was ready. Not five minutes later we left the compound, A-doo and I in the center of the string of rickshas.

It was about one o'clock in the morning, and the ghostly radiance of a rising moon gave the pointed shadows a palpable blackness. In truly medieval fashion, the Chinese houses were closely shuttered and barred. Once or twice we passed a tailor's shop lit with smoky oil lamps, where twenty or thirty men were bending at work over Singer sewing machines. Out from the tangle of Chinese quarters surrounding the hospital, we burst upon Nanking Road, a glaring gash of modernity cutting across the shrouded, ancient city. We left the international settlement behind us, ran across some bare, ill-smelling fields where the wind nipped the blood, and plunged into "Frenchtown." Here again we soon lost ourselves in an aimless twisting back and forth through narrow alleys.

Since leaving St. Margaret's no one had spoken. The two men before me bobbed along like specters in an interminable nightmare. I looked back and saw

A-doo's pale face and her kind, intelligent eyes. It reassured me. I had reconciled myself to riding on for the rest of my life, in a cold and shivering darkness, to I knew not where, when we suddenly stopped. The shafts of the ricksha were tilted down, and I was precipitated from my seat. In a huddled throng, we moved to the entrance of a low Chinese house. Several men were seated in the room that opened from the street, and I had a blurred impression of smoke-blackened walls, and solemn, sedate faces pierced with long, gurgling pipes. A-doo and I, following the spokesman, mounted the ladder-like stairs, each step but as broad as the palm of a man's hand. At the head of the stairs we were shown into a small room lit by one candle. One bed, four-posted and canopied, as are all the Chinese beds in Shanghai, occupied most of the room, leaving only a narrow crack between its dirty bulk and a small shelf-like table against the wall. There was no window, and, of course, no water. Three women lay on the bed.

Then began my initiation into obstetrical work in China. A-doo was a great help. She divined my wants by the instinct of a long experience. She was the buffer between me and the impenetrable wall of Orientalism around me. Eventually we were ready. A-doo gave the chloroform, and I began my work. At the last moment, to prevent interruption, I had shut and barricaded the door. In this small closet, there was only the Chinese woman, her mother-in-law, A-doo, and myself. There was no air, the candle flickered maddeningly, and the sweet

insidious fumes of the chloroform expanded in the close atmosphere.

It was a long, hard case. At intervals, my consciousness grew alive to the crowded, silent, ominous life about me. I recalled an old hag that had stared at me from the door beyond; I felt acutely the lives of the hostile people of the house pressing upon me.

"Suppose the mother died? What if the child died?" I thought dully.

From the room beyond, a low, fitful sound fell on my ears, a sound as of the sudden moan of a strange wind around the corners of a deserted house. As I listened, the sound grew articulate, and unmistakable. It was a woman moaning.

My attention to this sound, so insidious and insistent, was sharply snapped by the first cry of the baby. The child yelled in a veritable paroxysm of rage at the misfortune of its sordid birth. As the crying of the infant in the close room rose triumphantly, there was an utter silence in the house, as if each inmate had held his breath for just that sound. The baby stopped yelling and lapsed into sobbing breaths. The house seemed to relax, and settle back again into the ways and thoughts of ordinary living. I imagined that each of those impassive faces took a long, deep, satisfied pull at the poisoned smoke that gurgled up through long, bamboo-stemmed pipes.

Out of this sudden calm and relief burst a wild shriek, repeated again and again in an increasing agony of intensity.

"Oh! My love! You are killing me." The voice broke into pitiful sobbing.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" over and over again it moaned, in such a helpless fury of petition that my blood curdled.

A-doo was already washing the baby. It was a cunning little thing, a creamy pink color, with black eyes and soft, downy, black hair. The mother was lying insensible, still half dazed by the anesthetic, and slumberous with the relief from pain.

While I stood irresolute, a brisk knock came at the door, and an imperious voice called.

"Is there a doctor in there?"

"Yes," I answered. "I'm coming."

I quickly unbarred the door and opened it. A crowd of Chinese men and women pushed past me into the narrow room, but I hardly noticed them. My eyes were fastened on the tall, blond white man who faced me, who started violently when I appeared.

"It's a woman," he muttered, and half turned away.

I had heard that remark before and had chastened my spirit to the acceptance of my body; but the privilege of helping I would not be denied.

"I am a physician," I urged. "Do let me help her."

He turned back and looked at me queerly. In that moment, as often before, I wished I were tall and broad and imposing.

"You're only a girl," he said. "You can't help."

By his expression, I knew he was wavering. The

sound of renewed moaning in the next room decided me. I slipped past him and entered.

In great contrast to the squalor I had left, the sumptuousness and magnificence of the apartment startled me. Pausing a moment on the threshold, my eyes swept the brocaded walls, the rug-strewn floor, the quaintly carved Chinese furniture of redwood and teak, and fastened themselves on a bed in the far corner. It was a beautiful bed of redwood, with headboard and footboard inlaid with ancient blue and white tiles. The posts were draped with crimson curtains. The room was softly but brilliantly lit by innumerable candles stuck on all available surfaces. Their sharp, bright, waving flames gave the room a strange significance of things unseen.

I crossed swiftly to the bed. A young Chinese girl was sitting on it, propped up against crimson cushions. In health she must have been extremely beautiful, with a soft, voluptuous, creamy beauty, but now her face was blanched with horror, and her features distorted with pain. Her eyes hurt me. They looked past me at the white, golden-haired man with the amazed, bewildered reproach of a dog that is struck by its master.

Instinctively my fingers closed over the young girl's wrist, while I scanned her countenance. From the corner of her mouth a dead-white, leprous streak trailed off across her cheek. Her breath came in irregular jerks and the same, low moan escaped her lips. Her pulse barely fluttered beneath my fingers. With sudden conviction, I leaned close

and smelt her breath. I caught a full whiff of the dangerous sweetness of carbolic acid.

I turned upon the white man in horror.

"Did you do this?" I cried.

The man looked at me, a flashing, blue glance, and on to the girl on the bed without replying.

"She will die in horrible agonies," I exclaimed.

"I know," he said in a queer, quiet voice that made me look at him again and notice how young he was. "I know," he repeated, "but you said you would help."

Looking at him, my scruples died within me. I knew antidotes were useless; too much time had elapsed since the swallowing of the poison.

I ran back to the other room for my hypodermic case. The mother was awake. Every one was happy because the baby was a boy; they beamed on me.

I returned to the girl, and after giving the hypodermic of morphine, sat on the edge of the bed to watch its effect. Soon the pitiful moaning ceased, and the face of the young girl smoothed itself into all the beauty of her youth. Its soft, oval contour held a subtle charm. The languid flicker of her eyelids revealed her luminous dark eyes. She smiled at me, and putting her hand to her neck, she drew off a finely carved jade figure hung on a thin gold chain.

"Thank you. It hurts no more," she said softly.

Then her attention lapsed from me entirely.

The golden-haired man was kneeling by her bed, covering her hand with kisses.

"Forgive me, May-ling," he murmured.

With her last strength, the girl lifted her hand to touch his pale, gold hair. I heard her reply. It and what the man answered have gone on reverberating through my mind.

"I understand," she said. "So we had arranged it. Love always kills something."

She closed her eyes. Again in the crowded house a great stillness reigned, not the stillness of expectancy, but that of an end.

I stood at the window and waited, for what I hardly knew, but I only knew that I could not leave. I wanted to understand. Outside, a dim dawn drew its curtain of light over the peaked roofs of the city.

The man began to speak to me quietly.

"You are young," he said, "perhaps too young to understand. Yet I want to justify our act in your eyes, for I cannot bear that any shadow should rest upon our love."

So far he had spoken calmly. Now he hurried on as if fearful of being stopped by a growing excitement.

"I met her in the interior, up river, in the hills. She was married at twelve to a wealthy Mandarin, who sent her to England to a boarding school for four years. There the soul that has slept for centuries in the Chinese race was wakened and fed. The future spread itself out for May-ling, as for any other maiden, filled with dreams of a prince and a great love. Then the Mandarin, her husband, brought her back and shut her up in his yamen."

I suppose I was looking at him stupidly, for he suddenly exclaimed vehemently.

"She felt it as you would feel it — the stifling of her brain, the turning back of her soul, the slavish ownership of her body. Then we met. Oh! I know how unusual it is! But her husband was so proud of her foreign learning and English ways that she was allowed to come to a small dinner. One week later we escaped together. We crept down the Yangtse in a common, brown-sailed junk, and we laughed when we saw the swift launch of the Mandarin steam past us. We were happy, as you have no conception of happiness."

The man paused and almost stopped.

"Oh, it doesn't matter how it happened," he continued. "Last night the Mandarin found us. I promised May-ling she should never fall into his hands alive."

He drew himself up regally beside the bed on which the lifeless girl lay. A half smiling tenderness was on his face.

"Love is the great adventure," he said softly.

A-doo came for me and we started back to the hospital, in my hands the carved jade talisman, the bringer of love and death, and in my heart the memory of his words echoing:

"Love is the great adventure!"

II

THE COOLIE'S WIFE

FOR a long time I could not tell the nurses apart. Each one seemed a black-haired, blue-gowned counterpart of the next, but after the night the Mandarin's bride died, I knew A-doo. Gradually, one by one, faces grew significant; May-li, with a round, smiling countenance; San-mae, taller and usually worried: Tsung-pau, of the agile legs: and lastly, Ah-tsi. The first day that I taught the English class I noticed her. She was tall and slender, with a straight-boned nose and pale, clearly marked lips. The nurses all wore the regular hat of Chinese women, a band of black satin or brocade, narrow across the forehead and curved out to cover the ears. With this hat, the pale oval of Ah-tsi's face was sharply outlined. She wore earrings, two loops of irregular pearls set in deep blue enamel. In class, and even at her work, she was inattentive and distrait, yet I could not bring myself to scold her because of an inexplicable quality in her smile.

One evening after I had made rounds, I went as usual to inspect the nurses' quarters and count heads for the night. At once I noticed an air of

subdued excitement. Ah-tsi was missing. I went to A-doo about it.

"Do you know where Ah-tsi has gone?" I asked.

A-doo shook her head in scared silence.

Tsung-pau volunteered in her quick, broken English: "Evening rice time, go out. Blue satin trousers wear."

"Was she alone?" I probed.

"Go alonee. Maybe, by-um-bly meet he," Tsung-pau answered.

Further than that I could elicit no information. The nurses, in their blue trousers and jackets, looked like young boys excited over a secret plot. I left word that Ah-tsi should report to me as soon as she returned.

I walked back slowly to the house. Each night in the short walk from the hospital, I felt plunged anew into the midst of China. The fantastic, upcurling eaves of the crowded houses that shut in our compound like a wall always reminded me that I was in the midst of an alien race that lived by traditions, trailed down the years from antiquity. That evening I paid no attention to the menacing rows of Chinese houses, as my thoughts were occupied with Ah-tsi. There were no stars. The night was black and shrouded with fog.

"Everything quiet?" asked Doctor Donnellon, as I sat down in a chair by the fire.

"Ah-tsi is out," I answered laconically.

"That accounts for Kwung-ling's behavior," Doctor Donnellon exclaimed.

Kwung-ling is the upstairs boy who carries the bath water, and scrubs the floors and makes the

fires. He is cross-eyed and timid; moreover, he is the husband of Ah-tsi.

"What has he been doing?" I asked.

"It's not what he has done, but what he has left undone," Doctor Donnellon replied. "Not a bucket of bath water has he carried up. I've rung for him, but he is not on the premises. Mio-kung (the head boy) says he left at seven o'clock."

"Ah-tsi left at five," I said. "Perhaps he went after her. I wonder what's up!"

"A-doo, in a moment of expansiveness, said Ah-tsi had a lover," answered Doctor Donnellon. "He is a man from her own village, Wusih, whom she knew before she married Kwung-ling."

"I thought such things didn't happen in China!" I cried in amazement.

"Everything happens in China, especially in Shanghai, where the East and West have met," replied Doctor Donnellon.

She picked up the poker and began to thrust ruminatively at the bed of coals.

"Since the Revolution," she continued, "danger to women runs like wildfire. The old restraints are gone, and no barricade of character has been built up behind the demolished strongholds. The women of the coolie class have always had more or less freedom."

"It's a real love story!" I exclaimed, with a prospective old-maid's interest. "Ah-tsi seems far above Kwung-ling. He is such a timid, shrinking sort of a man that I don't wonder she doesn't love him."

Doctor Donnellon looked at me queerly. An intense melancholy lay in her expression.

"Love, as we know it, probably doesn't enter into consideration," she said slowly. "Ah-tsi is tempted away by the mere physical attraction of the bigger man."

"Oh! You've seen him, have you?" I asked eagerly.

"Yes, several times," Doctor Donnellon replied. "He is the Raymonds' cook."

I easily recalled the man — tall, imposing, arrayed in a long cut-velvet garment, still arrogantly swinging a thick queue to his knees. Mentally, I placed the two men side by side, and I wondered when bodily qualities would cease to be supreme.

"One of the patients in the prisoner's ward escaped this afternoon," said Doctor Donnellon. "An old woman, about sixty, wrapped herself in her cotton-padded quilt and dropped from the second-story window. I found the comfort folded neatly by the steps. The gatekeeper was having one of his periodical naps, I suppose, when she went by."

"How did she dare!" I exclaimed. "She was a miserable old hag, and would have been much better off in the hospital."

"You've not learnt the value of freedom," Doctor Donnellon said.

I stole a glance at her face. I wondered why every one seemed to think I knew nothing of life, or love, or freedom. I wasn't so young, after all. In fact, a week ago I had passed my twenty-seventh birthday.

As if she were able to read my thoughts, Doctor Donnellon said: "Having heard about facts isn't knowing them."

Miss Reilley burst in with barely a knock.

"Oh! Doctor Wilhelmina!" she exclaimed, "Miss Carter has such a bad headache. She asked me to see if you would make her an eggnog."

"Certainly," I said, rising. "I'm sorry she has another of her attacks."

To reach the kitchen and the servants' quarters, I had to cross an unroofed alley which divided them from the house. The fog had grown denser and touched my cheeks like unseen fingers. The night was made for tragedy, but in the kitchen all was cheerful and lively. The four regular menservants, plus two "makee learns", the ricksha coolies, and three or four relatives were seated close together around an eating table, busily engaged in shoveling rice into their mouths. Their method of eating fascinated me. Each man held his bowl at his lips, as we would a cup of tea, opened his mouth to the fullest capacity, and, with a pair of chopsticks, deftly poked in as much as his mouth would hold. Between each mouthful, the men put down their bowls and conversed.

As I stood watching the scene, Kwung-ling entered by the opposite door and sat down with the other men. I looked at him with a newly awakened interest, trying to make his proportions fit those of a hero of the play. Between his gulps of rice, he glanced over his shoulder from time to time, towards the door by which he had entered. Before I had

time to move, a figure emerged from the darkness beyond the doorway and jauntily strutted into the room.

I recognized the Raymonds' cook. He began to speak in a torrent of sibilant words, parading about and swinging his limber pigtail from side to side. His arrival was greeted with utter silence. Mio-kung pulled down the corners of his mouth in a contemptuous smile and went on shoveling in rice by the bowlful.

No one had noticed me. I was in the shadow of the doorway. Looking up quickly, I caught sight of a woman's figure hovering outside.

In a flash the pretty, trivial scene was rent by the lightning of tragedy. Without any warning, Kwung-ling whirled upon his stool, caught up the carving knife, and cut his rival's throat. He wiped the blade off on a flap of his long coat, and sat down again at the table to finish his rice. His face showed no sign of emotion or excitement, merely a slight satisfaction.

The other servants leaped up, chattering in a shrill tumult. Only Kwung-ling remained at the table, complacently eating his rice. I sprang forward in a vain endeavor to staunch the spurting blood.

"Quick! Call Doctor Donnellon," I cried to Mio-kung.

He hurried away. The other men were jabbering and gesticulating frantically. The man's blood gushed over my futile fingers in warm splashes.

Out of the darkness beyond the door emerged the slim figure of Ah-tsi, dressed in pale-blue bro-

caded trousers and jacket to match. Her high standing collar was edged with soft white fur that lay against her creamy cheeks. Her delicate oval face was slightly tinged with pink. She walked in quickly, with a determined air, entirely mistress of herself. Casting one scornful glance at the fallen, gory man prone upon the floor, she walked up to Kwung-ling and touched his arm. At her touch, the man was electrified. He caught her hand, and together they ran out of the room. We never saw either of them again.

All of our efforts to save the murdered man were useless. He bled to death in five minutes. Kwung-ling had severed neatly and completely both carotid arteries, and hacked open the windpipe.

Doctor Donnellon telephoned the police court, and that was the end of the affair. The next morning a new coolie appeared with the bath water. Doctor Donnellon seemed quite undisturbed.

"Don't you feel shivery about all those men in the kitchen since last night's murder?" I could not forbear asking her.

"No," she said. "No Chinese servant, or, for that matter, no Chinese, would hurt a foreigner in the settlement."

"What will happen to Ah-tsi?" I asked with curiosity.

"Kwung-ling will either kill her or forgive her," Doctor Donnellon answered.

"Forgive her!" I repeated, mystified.

"Why not?" replied Doctor Donnellon. "His rival is dead, his supremacy reasserted."

"But what of the woman's feelings?" I insisted.

Doctor Donnellon glanced at me and then away, out of the window, to the irregular piece of blue sky cut by the up-curling eaves of the Chinese houses.

"Ah-tsi is probably satisfied," she answered.

"And you mean that this is the end of the whole affair?" I exclaimed. "Aren't you going to do anything?"

"Oh! You *are* young," smiled Doctor Donnellon. "In a four-year medical course you ought to have learned more philosophy than to be upset over a murder and a betrayal. I have more faith in the body's power to resist microbes than in the soul's to withstand temptation."

Doctor Donnellon got up and left the room. From the window, I saw her cross the compound and enter the hospital. I couldn't help wondering at her impassivity under this tragedy. She was neither agitated nor shocked, nor yet harshly critical of any of the trio. In my hot-headed youth, I felt the need of taking sides, of punishing the wrongdoers, and rewarding the righteous. In this case, all three, — Ah-tsi, Kwung-ling, and the handsome cook, — seemed equally sinners.

Suddenly, with a shock of surprise, I grasped the meaning of Doctor Donnellon's attitude. To her and to the Chinese, this tragedy was just ordinary living, and as such to be accepted, not criticized, the offenders to be helped, not punished.

Ah-tsi's face, with its soft beauty, came to my mind, and her lustrous brown eyes questioned me:

"Who are you that condemns?"

III

FLYING STONES

"YOU will have to go alone, Doctor Wilhelmina," said Doctor Donnellon. "A walk will do you good. I am too tired to come. Besides, I am expecting to be called out on that Seymour Road case at any moment."

"I am sorry you can't come," I replied. "I hope you will have time for a little rest before you are called. Good-by."

Wild horses could not have kept me indoors that afternoon. We had had a week of fine weather that had brought out all the early fruit blossoms. In the gardens the plums and cherries were huge bouquets of pink and white fragrance. I walked quickly along Hart Road, turned to the right, and struck out across the country. The fields, that a month ago had been barren and brown, were now a vivid green. Through the interlacing branches of the leafless trees, blue sky and floating white cloud puffs chased each other. A string of laden wheelbarrows, holding eight or nine women apiece, hands from the silk mills, passed me. Otherwise the road was empty.

At Christmas Doctor Donnellon had given me a light, walnut-stained, bamboo cane. I was very

fond of it and always carried it on my solitary walks, To-day I swung it back and forth jauntily, quite contented with my lot as a missionary doctor in China. In spite of their dirt and in spite of their language, I liked the Chinese.

In half an hour I came to Soochow Creek and crossed it into the Chapei Native district. At first I did not realize that I was beyond the limits of the International Concession, though I was astounded at the squalor and poverty of the huts that bordered the road. They were merely low, square rooms, made of pieces of matting sewn together, entirely without windows or doors. If any one wished to enter, he pushed aside a loose mat and squirmed in. The children playing about were covered with scabs and ulcers, and the dogs were piebald with mange. I would have turned back but that in the distance I saw the graceful, peaked roofs of a pagoda.

A little urchin ran after me, grinning and calling "Nga-kok nyung" (foreign kingdom man), "Nga-kok nyung." As my custom was in the settlement, where all are friendly, I turned and smiled and waved my hand. This proceeding scared him half out of his wits. Screaming with fright, the child threw himself on the ground and pounded the earth with his hands and feet. Immediately a crowd collected about him, some soothing the child, some scowling at me. At his cry I had stopped to see if he were hurt, but finding that I was the cause of the trouble, I turned away and walked on. In a few moments I dismissed the matter from my thoughts.

The brilliant sun made the brass-tipped eaves of the pagoda glitter like jewels.

I was walking forward eagerly when I heard the sound of running footsteps behind. Perhaps if I had not turned to look back it might have been all right, but instinctively I stopped and looked over my shoulder. I saw a handful of big boys and one yapping cur running along the road towards me. As I paused, a sudden shower of small stones fell about me. One hit my shoulder, and a faint stain of blood dyed my thin waist.

At the touch of that hostile missile, a wild wrath boiled up within me. Missionaries are supposed to feel only righteous wrath. I am not sure about the adjective that should qualify my feeling, but the feeling itself I recognized. Very often I realize that I am not fit to be a missionary, and in such moments of humility I try to console myself with the shortcomings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. At that moment however I didn't stop to justify myself. I turned around and shook my cane at that group with an air of fiendish vindictiveness.

They wheeled precipitously. The hindermost boy tripped over the dog, and the rest tumbled upon him. I couldn't help laughing, they were so easily dismayed.

Again I set my eyes on the gleaming brass peaks of the pagoda and walked on. The sun was almost setting. As the Chinese say, "The sun falls down the hill of heaven." Long level rays shot over the flat earth and covered the mud huts and green fields with a veil of woven, golden gauze. A faint mist began to rise from the ground.

A second stone hit me full on the ankle. It stung like fury. Turning, I found that the number of my pursuers had doubled, and a few men hung on the fringe of the group. More stones fell about me, several hitting my head and shoulders. Shouting and beating the air with my trusty bamboo cane, I advanced towards my persecutors. Again, with delighted shrieks, they fled, and once more I set out for the sunlit pagoda.

But my heart wasn't in it. I didn't care whether the brass gleamed like gold and the eaves slanted upwards. I didn't think that trailing pink clouds made a wonderful background for the century-old wood of the roof. I tensed all my faculties in the one act of listening. I tried to count the number of bare, padding feet scurrying after me. Was it six or twenty or one hundred? Now and again came harsh, taunting cries and the crisp chatter of flying, falling stones. They concentrated their efforts on my ankles.

How I longed for a Sikh policeman in his handsome blue uniform and crimson turban! I could have embraced him! In fact, I would have embraced any foreigner whatsoever, even any respectable Chinaman!

I reflected on the number of missionaries stoned and burned yearly. Also I remembered that the Republic was but one year old and anti-foreign feeling still in existence. Fit, or not fit, I seemed to be chosen for a martyr's death. I wondered how St. Stephen felt! I was mortally afraid.

I began to run. I set my eyes on that gleaming

pagoda and ran for dear life, at first easily and swiftly. The pagoda came nearer by leaps and bounds. As my tormentors chased me, the flying stones ceased. Suddenly I found my knees were trembling. My throat was dry, and my breath came in great gasps. A cloud floated between the pagoda and my straining eyes.

I stopped dead and faced about. Because of the pounding of the pulses in my ears, I could not hear the approach of the rabble, but through my tears I saw them magnified into the huge black hulk of an antediluvian monster. With the certainty of doom, my senses cleared, and I grew quite calm.

Ahead of the nondescript horde ran a lithe youth about sixteen years old. Poised in his upraised arm I saw a large round stone. His still uncut queue flapped behind him.

I did the only thing that remained to be done. I ran to meet him and broke my futile, vainglorious cane over his shoulder. Then my hands fell to my sides, and I awaited the next assault.

It never came. The boy, at the snapping of my cane, laughed shrilly but broke off in mid-air. With terrified eyes he stared over my shoulder, then began to back off towards his companions. The group behind him halted, then turned and fled. The cur howled dismally. The boy gave a shriek, whirled around, and raced after his comrades. The large round stone dropped unheeded to the earth.

I stood petrified. Aid had come, as it always does, at the last, unhoped-for moment. Who or how or what, I did not know, nor did it matter. I had

been saved. I felt the Lord had sent His Angels to beat the air with their unseen wings and strike terror into the hearts of the heathen. My knees began to shake, and I found it advisable to sit down by the roadside.

"Are you hurt?" a man's voice behind me asked.

"No," I gasped. With the assurance of safety and protection I began to cry. I don't at all remember what the man said or did, but eventually I found myself stuttering out the details of what had happened.

"I don't know how to thank you," I ended tritely.

"Never mind that," he answered. "Do you still want to see the pagoda?"

His question took my breath away. In my heart of hearts I considered myself quite unfit to walk, or take an interest in anything less spiritual than my saved life. He treated my escape in a very offhand fashion. Well, if he wanted to, so could I.

"Certainly," I answered in my most sprightly manner. "If it isn't too late."

"Not at all," my rescuer replied. "The sunset view is especially fine from the top gallery. The custodian is a friend of mine. Shall I help you up?"

"I am entirely recovered, thank you," I said.

Unaided I rose to my feet and once again set out towards the pagoda. I furtively dabbed my eyes and looked at the man beside me as often as I could without being observed. I saw his feet very plainly, neat, trim feet, shod in very stubby-toed American shoes. I also managed to see his ears. They were not red; I was distinctly glad of that.

"How did you make the Chinamen turn tail so suddenly?" I asked.

"This way," he replied, slipping his hand into his hip pocket and drawing out a small shining pistol. "I merely pointed it at them. It was sufficient."

"I can't begin to thank you," I stammered again.

"Don't begin, for heaven's sake," he protested with a sound of merriment in his voice. "If I had not happened to come along, some one else would have. You acted as if you shared my philosophy. Help always does turn up at the last, despaired-of moment."

"It's unpleasant, waiting for that last moment," I answered. "I expected to be stoned to death."

"I thought you would be," the man replied soberly. "I saw you from the pagoda. When you began to run, I was terrified. You faced them splendidly at the end. You must have hit that fellow a pretty strong crack to break your cane at the first stroke."

I began to laugh. "It was bamboo," I explained. He laughed aloud in amusement.

We soon reached the gate of the enclosure surrounding the pagoda. It opened to the push. A fat, sleek Chinaman rose from a bench before the gate house and came towards us. My companion left me to speak to him. After a brief conversation he returned and led the way up flights of extremely steep stairs. We emerged on the narrow gallery that was overhung by the topmost roof. A very low parapet of painted tiles ran along the edge,

and my companion and I leaned back against the inner wall and let our eyes sweep over the view before us. At the left lay Shanghai, with its foreign buildings and chimneys rising like spars above the floating, sealike mist that thickly covered the whole plain. The waves of the fog heaved and billowed, and were opalescent with sunlight.

"A beautiful sight," said the stranger, "but deadly. Have you taken any quinine?"

I smiled at the question. "I am a doctor," I replied.

He started. "You, a doctor!" he exclaimed. "I can't believe it!"

"Why not," I retorted with some heat.

My fitness for medicine was a sore point with me. I boasted a purple seal from the New York Regents, one of the five awarded that spring among five thousand students.

"I suppose I am too small!" I flung at him.

"Perhaps," he answered vaguely, adding, "I only wonder you have had the leisure," making his meaning quite obvious by a quick glance from his eyes.

"I don't like men in general," I answered his glance, "nor any one in particular," I hastened to add.

He smiled as though suddenly pleased at something.

"Nor I women in general," he replied. "Only one thing draws me — life, in all its wide, strange forms. For about five years now I've been traveling and watching. But, in my search, I have never

THE CREEK, NEAR RUBICON ROAD, SHANGHAI

included sampling the sweets. One soul attracts another by infallible sympathies. I have waited for that."

His eyes were upon me with an intentness of glance that held me silent. He was leaning against the low parapet to face me. The sun lit up one side of his face and hair with a clear light.

"About a month ago," he continued, "I was in the Temple of the Red-lipped Idols in the Native City. The air was dim and fragrant with rising incense. I was staring overhead at the huge, carven monsters, then at the floor, at the kowtowing Chinese. Suddenly, through the fragrant, floating incense, I met a pair of eyes, — soft, intense, brown eyes, — that looked directly into mine. They were your eyes. Do you remember?"

I nodded and stretched out my hands towards him. For half a minute we faced each other with clasped hands, then, for fear of what he might say next, I quickly ran down the stairs. At the gate an open victoria was waiting for us. The drive home passed like a mirage. I scarcely noticed the huts of flapping mats and the mangy children. At the steps of "The Ladies House" I hesitated a moment. The stranger, hat in hand, was standing waiting.

"I don't know your name," I stammered, "but won't you call?"

IV

THE GIRL FROM TUNIS

ABOUT seven o'clock in the evening I started out to meet the tender on which the new nurse for St. Margaret's was to arrive. She was to start the new training school for Chinese nurses. Her name was Miss Laurie, and she was a Bryn Mawr girl. So much and no more we knew. Doctor Donnellon and I had been speculating about her. Doctor Donnellon hoped she would have a good digestion, and I hoped she wouldn't be too good to live with. I had put a bunch of violets in an old brass bowl on the dressing table in her room and had lent her my window curtains freshly starched and ruffled. I didn't want her room to look too barren.

Nanking Road was thronged with Chinese. Two new jeweler shops had been recently opened, and the entire façades of the two buildings were covered with hundreds of colored electric lights in rosettes of rainbow silk; and in the fantastic shapes of tigers and dragons and roosters. Opposite their blazing front the street was blocked with gaping admirers. The flare of the light was reflected against the sky in a luminous haze.

Marching along by the curbing, in groups of twos and threes, followed at a respectful distance by their

ever-watchful amahs, were the satin-trousered night slaves of the east, young girls with spots of scarlet on their eyelids and upper lips. At the debouchment of the cross roads, drab-colored groups clustered and peered enviously at the satin-clad girls that walked the road. Before the new Chinese theater advertising ideographs flashed in changing colors. In my mood of the moment China seemed quite progressive and up to date.

At the jetty I found that the tender was expected in ten minutes. Standing at the end of the wharf, I scanned the harbor, an indistinct, blue-gray background, against which the junks and launches moved as darker shadows punctuated with light. The black outline of a warship, pierced with innumerable, tiny yellow globes of light, loomed through the gloom. While I was watching her, a junk with a high curling poop and a tall oblong sail slipped between us. Close to the pier, within the radius of its light, rocked a dozen or so small rowboats. On each side of the prows were carved and painted eyes that made the boats look like sea dragons.

A group of Europeans were waiting at one end of the jetty, and beyond them were Chinese, some in foreign cloth suits and some in native satins. I was struck by the barbaric gorgeousness of one tall, handsome young man. His queue was cut, and his hair had been allowed to grow thick and long over his forehead and neck. Instead of an appearance of femininity, this gave him a look of fierce, almost cruel strength. His short, sleeveless outer jacket was of plum-colored satin, and his long garment of

slate-blue satin lined with very white and very fleecy lambs' wool. A Frenchman with upturned moustaches and full beard joined them. His appearance was shabby and mediocre, and his stature stunted. In no way, except in the nameless flavor of race, could he compare with the splendid specimen of Chinese manhood before him. He was evidently a piece of driftwood whom life was treating badly, yet he thrust out his chest vain-gloriously and spoke in shrill, excited tones.

"I tell you again and again, she vill gome. Regard me. Am I not her elder broder? Am I not head of my family? Have no fear. She gomes."

The man's words were easily heard, and they aroused my curiosity.

A series of harsh toots announced the arrival of the tender. The passengers were lined along the rail, and I scanned their faces eagerly in search of Miss Laurie. She was to wear an American flag pinned on her coat. In the twilight on the deck I could distinguish no separating badge, but as the passengers stepped gingerly down the gangplank, the familiar colors greeted me from the jacket of the third comer. Miss Laurie was tall and stately and young. As we shook hands, I saw that her eyes were blue and her hair gold.

"She looks good," I said to myself. "It is fortunate she is blond. Blond holiness is so much less disagreeable than brunette holiness."

"You must be nearly famished," I said to her. "Doctor Donnellon is waiting dinner. If you will point out your trunks to our boy, he will attend to

bringing them up. What kind of a trip have you had? Was it frightfully hot in the Red Sea?"

Miss Laurie had come out via Europe.

"For twenty-four hours it was rather uncomfortable," she answered, "but I didn't mind it much. The two typhoons we ran into on the way up from Canton were infinitely more unpleasant." She broke off abruptly to hurry after a vanishing trunk. After a short search for her belongings, we were ready to leave.

"Just a moment more," said Miss Laurie. "I want to say good-by to a charming French girl that I met on the steamer, Therèse Fleurir. I have been watching for her, but I have not seen her get off. She is coming out to be married. Her elder brother, whom she has not seen for years, has arranged it. Isn't it a hideous method? But she doesn't seem to mind; on the contrary, she is elated at the prospect and looks upon it as a release. She lived in Tunis and had a position as a stenographer in the French Embassy."

Miss Laurie hurried up the gangplank, leaving me plunged in dismay. It was painfully easy to fit together brother and sister and to fathom the trap that had been laid for the girl. I wondered if she would mind. You never can tell about "foreigners." The Chinamen were evidently rich.

As I turned from again staring at the Chinese, Miss Laurie was descending the gangplank. Following her came a slight, shrinking figure dressed in subdued colors, save for two crimson plumes in her soft black hat. The girl was trying to hide behind Miss

Laurie. Miss Laurie beckoned to me and I hurried towards her.

"May I bring Therèse to the mission house for to-night?" she asked. "She is frightened and terrified at something she has seen."

"Certainly," I answered.

Miss Laurie stepped aside. For an instant the French girl hesitated. An arc light threw its glare over her, revealing a face both delicate and intelligent. In that instant's pause, the chance for escape unrecognized was lost. The shabby, bearded Frenchman leaped forward.

"Mon Dieu! C'est Therèse," he fairly screamed.

He waved his cane in the air and caught her by the arm, dragging her towards the group of Chinamen.

"You see, you see," he cried, hopping about in wild satisfaction. "Behold, I write, she gome. See, is she not beautiful? White skin, like ze so rare snow, a straight nose, and small feet. Ah! Zay vill not disgrace you, zose feet, nor ze feet of your shildren. May you have only men shildren! To-night you shall be married. But first you must pay me ze sum you promised, the five hundred taels."

The man's voice climbed higher and higher till he shrieked the last sentence. During his harangue the girl stood as if utterly dazed. At the end she lifted her eyes to sweep the circle of Oriental faces hemming her in.

"Salute her," the brother urged, "like a gentleman."

The Frenchman gave the tall handsome youth a vigorous dig with his cane. The boy laughed aloud.

"Like a foreigner I will salute her," he shouted triumphantly.

Catching the French girl in his arms, he kissed her.

The touch stung her to life. She wrenched herself free and rushed to the edge of the pier. I caught a glimpse of a white despairing face under the flame-colored plumes. Simultaneously Miss Laurie and I grasped her intention. Miss Laurie caught her in her strong arms.

"Let me go," she stormed. "To die now is fitting. So it must be. A daughter of my race cannot marry a Chinaman."

She struggled wildly, but Miss Laurie held her securely, and I heard her whispering insistently to the girl. I turned to the rabid brother. Like a vexed child, he was dancing up and down with mortification and anger.

"Such an insult! The ingrate! Here, have I found a rich husband who is willing to marry her, marry her legally, I say, and the first moment she meets him, she insults him. Listen, Therèse," he called, edging nearer the girl. "Remember your life of drudgery, no pleasure, no fine clothes, no jewels, no pastries. Consider it well. He will give you everything. Regard him. I say that he is rich."

At this point the Chinese broke in stormily. From their conversation I gathered that the bridegroom's family had already paid down five hundred taels for the girl and that five hundred more were

to be handed over upon her arrival. Fearing to lose both money and face, they were furious and insisted upon possession of the girl.

I was at my wits' end. Whatever happened to-night would be irrevocable, either the Chinaman would get Therèse, or we would rescue her. Save for a gang of coolies unloading cargo, we were alone on the jetty. I longed for a man, and, above all other men, for Edward Stevens, my pagoda man. My wish was a prophecy. Looking up the road, I saw him walking briskly toward us. I ran to him and broke into breathless explanations.

"You want to take the French girl with you to-night; is that it?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered. "Arrange for to-night, now. To-morrow we can settle matters."

Edward stood a moment scrutinizing the group of Chinese, then he selected the oldest man dressed in foreign clothes and addressed his remarks to him.

"I understand that you wish to obtain in marriage for one of your family a foreign-born maiden and in all things to follow the foreign custom," he said courteously.

Edward's clear, incisive words held their attention. The shabby brother, with his cane still poised in mid-air, stopped in the midst of a sentence. Even Therèse checked her sobs to listen.

"It is not according to 'Old Custom' to take the maiden to your house to-night. To-night she must lodge with her friends and to-morrow the bride-groom may seek her there. I will give you my address, and you can call in the morning."

Edward took out his visiting card and handed it to the old man.

The Frenchman expostulated. "Do not listen to him; it is not so."

Edward turned on him with subdued anger. "Shut up!" he whispered fiercely. "I am managing this affair now."

The fellow cringed. He disgusted me, but he looked as if he had been half fed for years, and I was sorry for him in spite of myself.

That was the end of the affair. Edward's presence calmed every one. The Chinamen dispersed, the shabby outcast slunk away. Edward put Miss Laurie and Therèse into a cab, and we got into another.

I smiled at him. "Edward to the rescue again," I said gratefully. "If you stay in Shanghai much longer, Mr. Stevens, I shall grow to be quite dependent on you."

"Nothing would please me better," he answered.

"How out of date you are," I replied. "Nowadays, men like self-reliant girls who carry their own suit cases and who don't need to be seen home in the evenings."

"If that is your idea of modern men," Edward answered, "I am thankful you class me among the ancients."

"How do you like Shanghai?" I asked.

"Only fairly well," he answered. "As a place for courting it has certain advantages. It provides medieval situations of 'Fair Damsel in distress' and 'Gallant Knight to the rescue.' However I

do not know whether such episodes are not too dearly bought by the lack of woods and trees and streams and wild flowers."

"The moon and the stars are still left," I suggested.

"Too remote," Edward objected.

"How did you happen to come to meet Miss Laurie?" I questioned.

"I didn't 'happen to come'," he replied; "I came because you wanted me."

"I never once thought of you," I exclaimed. "First I was thinking about Miss Laurie and then about the French girl."

For reply, Mr. Stevens looked at me strangely. I don't know what to do when he looks at me that way. I feel as if a door in my brain had opened to him, and he knew all my thoughts.

"I should have said, I came because I was thinking of you," he corrected himself. "My thoughts led my footsteps."

When a clever man is gracious, he is really very attractive. I was in a yielding mood, and such places are dangerous. But being a woman of years, I was discreet. I leaned back in the corner of the seat and changed the subject.

"What will become of the poor child Therèse?" I asked.

"I will go to the French consul in the morning and have the matter put straight," Mr. Stevens replied. "That scoundrelly brother will have to fork up his five hundred taels and make all the amends he can. As for what will become of the

girl, you women will have to decide. After all, when she grows used to the idea, she may be willing to marry the Chinaman."

We had reached the steps of the mission house, where Doctor Donnellon was receiving the two girls.

"I can believe it was a shock to her," Mr. Stevens continued, "as she was evidently expecting something very different."

"It's quite too much of a shock to contemplate marrying at all, no matter how nice the man," I said, as I sprang out of the carriage and followed the others.

V

GLOWING NEEDLES

THERÈSE clung to Miss Laurie piteously. The next morning after her arrival she had absolutely refused to see or write to her brother, and as Mr. Stevens had given the Chinamen only his own address, the fellow had no means of tracing his sister. The affair was fixed up amicably with the Chinese. The brother produced the money already paid over, and the incident was closed. To all intents and purposes, Therèse Fleurir was swallowed up in the Orient. For days she was afraid to stir out of the house, but eventually she found a position to teach in one of the schools in Frenchtown. The salary was not large, but it was ample for clothes and board. Doubtless, sooner or later, Therèse would marry, so the incentive to save for a rainy old age was removed. The principal of the school, a rich widow, took a great fancy to her, and after two weeks invited Therèse to live with her. Miss Laurie received an enthusiastic note from the child.

"The house is beautiful, so large and so much marble. My bathroom has white tiles. And, moreover, Oh, joy! the cuisine is French. Come,

my friends, and taste and see and enjoy. Madame Rounger has urged me to invite you. The time is next Thursday for dinner at eight. Adieu, I live only till we meet."

Miss Laurie smiled over the exaggerated wording of the letter, but nevertheless she was pleased. A "community dinner" is a distracting event in a missionary's life.

When he heard of Therèse's position, Mr. Stevens shook his head dubiously.

"It is too good to be true," he said. "I am afraid Therèse has leaped from the frying pan into the fire. Anyway I hate to have you over in Frenchtown at night. I'll call for you with a carriage at ten o'clock."

"That is much too early," I cried. "Dinner will hardly be over."

"Four women can't eat for two hours," Edward objected. "I shall be there at ten."

"Exactly, 'Just four women'!" I retorted, angered. "You needn't come for those women at all, Mr. Stevens. They prefer to do as they please rather than to ride in a carriage at a man's dictation."

"Firebrand!" muttered Edward. "I wonder what you will set alight!"

"You?" I flung at him tauntingly.

For answer, Edward looked at me in that disconcerting way of his which makes me feel there is no use pretending. I like Edward, but I don't like men's attitude toward women. Men are handy, that's all. I stiffened and refused to relent, though Edward harped again on his favorite subject

of souls akin. Men and women are too different to be akin. They are like the banks of a river, gashed apart. Often and often Doctor Donnellon lectured me on my man-hating attitude. "Don't you know men like girls who hate them?" she would say. At that I always fled. I did not see Edward again before the night of the dinner, and Miss Laurie and I made arrangements to keep our rickshas all the evening.

Madame Rounger's house stood in a large garden and thoroughly came up to Therèse's description. Our dilapidated old rickshas seemed very insignificant, rolling in under the high porte-cochère. At the ignominious moment when the coolie put the shafts on the ground and tilted me suddenly forwards, as if I were descending from a camel's back, a luxurious automobile panted up behind us. Four gentlemen in evening dress got out of the car. Being continental, they raised their hats and said "Good evening." An extremely handsome Chinese footman, dressed in full European uniform, opened the door to us, and we entered a hall, the entire height of the house, running from east to west. In the center, on either side, were doorways hung with heavy velvet portières leading to the salon and the dining room.

Therèse came demurely down the stairs to meet us, and led us up to her room, chatting volubly all the way.

"It is to be a big dinner," she announced at once. "A man apiece."

"Pooh, I would not have come if I had known

there were going to be men," I exclaimed, provoked in spite of myself.

"Silly," said Therèse lightly, "you needn't be afraid. You look very pretty to-night. I love that turquoise gown of yours. It makes the brown of your eyes and hair deeper. Besides, the food will be better because the men are coming."

Therèse, in cerise chiffon, was an effective contrast to the pale, gold beauty of Miss Laurie, who was in absolute white.

"Chérie," cried Therèse, turning to Miss Laurie, "I am so glad you are not wearing a black velvet bow in your waist or a narrow black band around your throat! Only blonds passé and wicked, wishing for innocence, do that. You *are* innocent."

"You funny child!" answered Miss Laurie. "Because my skin is white, must my soul be white too?"

For a moment the young girl's face fell into the cast of tragedy so facile to the Latin race.

"Yes, yes," she replied quickly. "See me — I am stained."

When we entered the salon we found Madame Rounger surrounded by the men. She was a handsome woman of prepossessing appearance, skilfully dressed in black. She evidently wished to be considered young, and I wondered that she tolerated any one as truly young as Therèse near her. As soon as the introductions were over, Madame Rounger drew me aside.

"Therèse says you are a physician, though it is hard to believe. You look about eighteen.

Nevertheless, she assures me it is so. Pray forgive me if I trouble you. Just a moment ago, my table boy came to me in great consternation, saying that his only son was having a convulsion. I ordered him to immerse the child at once in a hot mustard bath. May I beg you to come to see him? I shall feel more comfortable through dinner."

"Certainly," I answered. "I shall be very glad to see the child."

Madame Rounger excused herself from the guests and led me from the room, through the back hall, along a covered corridor, to the semi-detached servants' quarters in the rear. On the second floor the doors of a row of cell-like rooms opened upon a narrow porch. From the corner room came the sound of confused and excited talk. The small space was crowded with jabbering women and boys. The sick child, a boy about ten, had just been taken out of the mustard bath and put to bed.

"Let us turn them all out but his mother," I insisted. "The child must be kept quiet." Madame Rounger and I pushed the women out by their shoulders. We got them as far as the doorway, where they massed themselves, following my every motion with their beady, curious eyes, as I made a quick examination of the child. Madame Rounger was able to supply me with the simple remedies that were needed, and after half an hour's work, I left the child sleeping quietly. As Madame and I left the room, the Chinese squeezed in behind us like an irresistible tide of water, eddying and flooding the land.

The dinner was delicious. Afterwards we scattered through the wide salon to drink our coffee, the men still with us, smoking cigarettes. Therèse, opposite me, was smoking too.

"Charmante," murmured Monsieur Armand, an old, white-haired gentleman beside me. "Do you not also smoke?"

"No," I answered simply, "I am a missionary."

"Ah, Mademoiselle, that is no answer," he said, spreading out his hands and shrugging his shoulders. "Smoking is not a deadly sin."

"But there are prejudices," I objected. "It would never do for a missionary to smoke."

"Anglo-Saxon!" he blurted out. "Incomprehensible people! They permit their young women to come, unprotected, halfway around the world to a heathen, Chinese city, but to smoke a delightful little cigarette after dinner, at home with friends, Ah, no! Mon Dieu! That is scandalous! Dangers they allow you, but no pleasures."

"But I don't care to smoke," I answered.

"Ah, no! Of course not. You are like a little saint, a medieval saint who stood away off in a stained-glass window and smiled on the world with sweet, pensive eyes and her smile was a blessing."

"I'm not at all like that," I contradicted sadly. "I'm not up in any cathedral window. I'm here, working in China; I've come, as you say, halfway around the world to work here. Nor am I pensive or sweet: I wish I were. I'm not really good enough to be a missionary; I'm just like everybody else."

The Frenchman looked at me as if I had been his daughter. I grew red and wondered why I had been so outspoken. Instinctively, I had relied upon his ready sympathy and understanding.

"You do not know yourself, Mademoiselle," he replied. "You cannot see the soft, gentle light in your brown eyes. Yet, you are making a mistake. I am not so old-fashioned as to think all women should be mothers — some are too hard and cruel, some too unstable and melancholy, some too stupid and dull. But you, you ought to be a mother."

I sat speechless before Monsieur Armand. I was astonished that I was not angry, but for the moment I was as simple and unaffected as he.

"And leave my work?" I exclaimed.

"To find your work," he answered.

In the pause that followed a shrill scream startled us. I sprang to my feet. "The little boy," I cried, and ran from the room. Scream after scream filled the air, the wild terrified screaming of a child in sharp pain. I ran quickly along the corridor and up the stairs. The door of the child's room was blocked with figures. I pounded at the shoulders of the nearest and pushed at them till they moved aside and let me pass. For half a moment, frozen with horror, I paused on the threshold.

The child, naked, was lashed to the bed with his arms outstretched along the footboard. His head was thrown back, and his eyes glared wildly at the people. Trickles of blood were running down the calves of his legs and dripping from his forearms. In the air was the nauseous odor of burnt flesh. An

old priest in a hideously dirty robe sprang up from the floor and thrust a red-hot needle through the child's leg. The boy writhed and screamed with pain.

I ran to him and jerked the burning needle out of his flesh and began pulling out the other needles which were stuck at random in his arms and legs. The Chinese behind me pulled at me and tried to catch my hands. The old priest broke into a torrent of threats and insults. The needles I had plucked out still glowed, red-hot, on the floor. I faced the Chinese angrily. They began to remember I was a foreigner, within the settlement, and they, only tolerated aliens. One by one they slunk away, till only the priest was left bending over the charcoal fire, muttering maledictions on the white woman. I cut the thongs and loosed the child. He seemed to know I was his deliverer, for he clung to me in frantic terror, sobbing and screaming.

Madame Rounger and Monsieur Armand appeared in the doorway. Madame Rounger turned out the old priest without ceremony and scolded her servant energetically.

"You shall go if you have any more of your heathen practices in my house," she said. "How often have I told you you cannot do such things. You are not fit to have a child!"

"But, Madame," stammered the terrified servant, "the devil have catchee my son. Must makee drive away. No can lose one only son. Must makee drive away, must piercee with burning needles. No can help. Must do."

The Chinaman began to cry. He was torn between a thousand fears of the evil spirits, of the strange white woman, of the burning needles. I soothed the child in my arms, and looked up at Monsieur Armand who stood beside me.

"How can you ask me to give up a work like this?" I asked.

He answered slowly, stroking the little boy's sleek black head that lay against my shoulder.

"If you had loved children enough, you would have guessed beforehand what these heathen Chinese parents would do." I wondered if he were right.

Edward called for us with an auto. Miss Laurie had decided to spend the night with Therèse, so he and I were alone in the tonneau.

"Do you want to go directly home?" Edward asked. "Let us first go to the point and back."

I acquiesced. I liked the drive to the point along the river bank. The night was clearly lit with stars. Two junks were creeping up the river, their huge sails looming, in the twilight, like the outspread wings of a gigantic bat. The air from the water was fresh.

"Now I am going to tell you about the first time I saw you," said Edward.

"You have already," I answered. "It was in the Temple of the Red-lipped Idols."

"No," he said. "It was exactly one year earlier. There had been a heavy snowstorm in Philadelphia, and the sleighing was good. I had hired a team of horses and a small sleigh and had gone for a long night ride. No wonder Ludwig of Bavaria was

wild about snow at night! It is the most wonderful, the most fairylike sight on earth. I came back through Fairmount Park along the Skuylkill and down Diamond Street. It was after midnight, and this part of the town was silent and soundless as a desert, rows and rows of small brick houses exactly alike, with lights out and shutters closed. At the crossing of Twenty-third and Diamond an arc light sputtered brightly. The horses were galloping softly on the thick snow. The bells on their collars made the only sound in the stillness of the sleeping city.

"At the corner, I looked up, suddenly and swiftly. In a third-story window knelt a girl in a white gown with a mass of soft brown hair loose upon her shoulders. Our eyes met. She drew back, startled, and the horses whirled me past. Like a knight of old I have come searching for that girl. In that lightning glance her spirit called to my spirit."

Edward turned and looked at me. "Do you remember it?" he asked softly.

Mute with astonishment, I nodded.

"I had come home from the theater," I explained later. "I had seen Mansfield in 'Peer Gynt', and the spell of the play was still on me. I could not go to bed, so I knelt at the window and waited. I watched the electric light sparkle on the snowflakes. The city was intensely still. Then, far off in the remoteness, I heard sleigh bells. They seemed to be what I had been waiting for. I had listened to them for several minutes before the sleigh dashed past, yet when you looked up, I was startled. I drew back and knelt there, harkening, while the

sound of the bells grew fainter. After I could hear them no longer, I still knelt at the window, listening and watching the light sparkle on the snow."

Edward's hand closed over mine.

"Though you fled halfway around the world to escape me, you could not," he said.

I left my fingers in his. The air from the water was cool and fresh in our faces. The gliding junks were out of sight — only the wide, slow stream crept along the bank.

VI

A ROMANCE OF THE EAST

I WAS amusing myself and incidentally the children by distributing a stack of old Christmas cards in the ward. My explanations were somewhat crude and simple, as my Chinese vocabulary was still limited. Doctor Donnellon and Miss Lancaster came in. Miss Lancaster has charge of the municipal orphanage for city waifs, and her sick children are taken care of at St. Margaret's.

"I've just had a most embarrassing experience," said Miss Lancaster, laughing at me. "I came to take the 'Blue Moon' back with me, but she won't come. She said the 'Summertime Doctor' (which is my Chinese name) had given her two pennies, and that if I would let her stay a little longer perhaps the doctor would give her another."

"You are spoiling these children," said Doctor Donnellon, shaking her finger at me. "A moment ago the matron sent for me to see the owners of 'Weeping Willow', who wished to take her home. The youngster was making a terrible rumpus, and begging to be allowed to stay. What do you suppose she said? 'Please, Foreign Healer, let me stay and be the little slave of the hospital! Here, when the amahs beat me, their hands are light.'"

"Poor little kid," I said, "I wish we could keep them all."

"Even the little slave girls are better off than my waifs," said Miss Lancaster.

A sudden commotion in the courtyard startled us. Running to the nearest window, I saw four men bringing in a long wicker couch, upon which lay a figure closely covered with blankets. A dozen or more men and women surrounded the couch. A nurse came flying upstairs.

"She has eaten opium," she cried excitedly.

"Another one of those tragic cases," said Doctor Donnellon, as we hurried down. "So often the family only bring the victims to us as a last resort when it is too late to save the patient."

Before coming to China I had never known that eating opium was the favorite way of committing suicide, nor had I imagined the alarming frequency of such attempts.

The bearers had deposited the couch in the empty clinic room. Some one uncovered the girl's face — pale and tranquil as the face of one already lying in the shadow of death. Its serene beauty fascinated me. It seemed almost sacrilegious to begin artificial respiration and energetic stimulation. Among the group gathered round two figures stand out in my memory. One was that of a woman who stood close beside the young girl, looking at her fixedly. Now and again she put out her hand and laid the back of it against the girl's cheek. She neither cried nor spoke. The other was a man dressed handsomely in satin, who stood aside talking to the matron and

Doctor Donnellon. Now and again he glanced at the girl, yet in his impassive face I could see no trace of emotion. The rest of the group shrieked and talked wildly and could not be quieted. Doctor Donnellon gave her orders with the surety of long experience. Slowly, rhythmically, we raised the girl's arms above her head and crossed them over her chest. There was no answering tinge of color in her lips, no spontaneous flutter of her breath.

"It's a hopeless case," said Doctor Donnellon. "She ate the opium about ten this morning but was not discovered till four this afternoon. Then they brought her right around."

"Why did she take it?" I asked. "Was she a slave?"

"No, she is a second wife," Doctor Donnellon said. "That man is her husband. She has been married about six months."

"I don't wonder she ate it," I exclaimed. "Practically she was a slave."

"Oh, no," Doctor Donnellon answered. "If the first wife has no children, a Chinaman marries a second, and if she bears him children, she is honored above the first. In this case the Great Wife, as the first is called, was very fond of this girl. The husband also valued her highly. She was not at all mistreated."

"Then why?" I asked again, raising my eyes to Doctor Donnellon. Her face, beside that of the immobile Chinese woman, had the same expression of submission to fate.

"She must die," interposed the Chinese woman, again touching the girl's cold face.

"Because she was forced to leave her mother." Doctor Donnellon answered. "This woman is her mother."

I looked at the mother and daughter and pondered upon the strange love that had held them together.

The woman touched Doctor Donnellon's arm. "It is enough," she said. "The spirit is already gone. Permit me now to take my daughter home and light the red candles and offer the food that everything may be fitting for the journey of her spirit."

Doctor Donnellon ceased her labor. Quiet, with the strange, sure repose of death, the girl lay upon the couch. Suddenly, some one began to laugh, and immediately the entire group were laughing loudly. I turned away. That sound of laughter as a greeting to death always curdled my blood with horror. I had heard it before in the wards when a patient died, and the rest sat up in bed and laughed aloud. Doctor Donnellon followed me out of the room.

"Doesn't it make you shiver?" I asked.

"Yes," she said, "I can't get used to it. It seems heartless, but no one can accuse the Chinese of that. Their loves are not our loves, but they are great loves. Think of this young girl. She made one early attempt to run home and was brought back. Then she bought morphine, and the first wife found it. This time she had been buying it little by little for months and hiding it in her money belt till she had enough for a fatal dose."

I was silent, considering what seemed to me a

childish, morbid, uncontrolled affection. Doctor Donnellon must have read my thoughts.

"All great nations have their own peculiar romance," she said. "In ancient times romance lay in the friendship of man for man, in the David and Jonathan sort of relationship. Later on, in the feudal ages, romance dwelt in the service of a vassal to his king, and loyalty was the great romance of life. In our modern American world the love of a man for a woman is the great romance."

I caught Doctor Donnellon's idea. "Not the relationship, but the romance, is indispensable," I said quickly.

"Exactly," Doctor Donnellon replied. "At home, there is a new romance growing up, the friendship of woman for woman, that parallels the ancient friendship of men. But in China all romance centers in the relation of parent to child. Marriage is no more to them than an ordinary business enterprise."

We had reached the steps of the house during our philosophizing, and Doctor Donnellon turned to face the hospital. Its many windows and wide verandahs gave it a comfortable, inviting appearance. On the second-story porch, a group of waifs were playing. The sun was low, and the sky above the buildings burned a deep, golden yellow. Already, close over the ground, a faint, misty veil hung. With a quick, spontaneous motion, Doctor Donnellon threw out one hand towards the hospital.

"There lies my romance," she said abruptly.

As if regretting her frankness, she turned quickly and walked into the house. I sat down on the

steps and propped my elbows on my knees. A profound sense of melancholy enveloped me, and the tragic death of the young Chinese girl filled me with sadness. Twilight fell while I brooded. One by one the stars came out, and each one made me lonelier than before. Then Edward came.

"What is the matter with you, Wilhelmina?" he asked. "You look as if some one had hurt you."

I looked up at him gratefully. I was thankful for his mere presence.

"Life in general hurts, doesn't it?" I answered. "Everything goes wrong. All love is wasted and lost."

I recounted the events of the afternoon, shivering a little as I retold the story.

"I believe you are cold," Edward exclaimed. "Put this on."

He wrapped the coat which he had been carrying over his arm around my shoulders. "You don't even know how to take care of yourself. You need a man to look after you. The trouble with you modern women is that you are all sensitiveness and no strength, no endurance, no robust optimism. A man *knows* it will all come out right, for he is so delightfully conceited that he trusts his own powers to right the whole world."

Edward seated himself beside me and shamelessly put his arm around me. The strength of it comforted me, and I dropped against him, my head on his shoulder. The words of the wise old psalmist came to my mind: "A man shall be as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

VII

THE BUSINESS OF LIFE

"WE will have to hurry if we expect to be ready by eleven o'clock," said Doctor Donnellon, as we started across the compound after breakfast to the hospital. "The carriage is coming at that hour."

"I'll begin the dressings right away," I answered. "I am quite eager to see what a Chinese wedding feast is like."

"This will be a modified festival on our account," replied Doctor Donnellon. "Nevertheless it will give you some idea of the Chinese customs."

At the hospital we parted, Doctor Donnellon to make medical rounds, and I to do the surgical dressings. One of the head nurses was also invited to the feast, as the old lady whose son was being married had been treated in the hospital. They were a very modern family. The old dowager sent her daughters-in-law to the hospital for their babies.

At eleven o'clock Doctor Donnellon and I were dressed and ready. I had consulted Doctor Donnellon as to what I should wear and was accordingly dressed in shirt waist and skirt. She wore her brown fur coat and cap.

"Probably we shall have to wait an hour or so before the carriage comes. Chinese have no idea of time," said Doctor Donnellon, settling herself at her desk. "A Chinese feast is a reluctant duty for me."

"Oh, I think it will be quite exciting," I answered.

"It's all very well for you," Doctor Donnellon replied. "You are new and fresh. Even managing chopsticks will amuse you. But Chinese feasts are old stories to me. Wait till you have tried it, three hours at table with Chinese women, and no real conversation at all; besides that, there will be at least thirty dishes to sample. Let me warn you, child, do be careful. Choose what you eat and only eat a little. The cooking is savory, and most foreigners are apt to overeat."

"I'm glad I don't know much Chinese," I said. "I will only have to smile and eat, and eat and smile."

"As a continuous performance, that is not as easy as you think," said Doctor Donnellon.

Mio-Kung announced the arrival of the carriage. The eldest daughter-in-law, mother of three sons, had come in a ricksha to escort us. It was then almost twelve, and we still had to wait while A-doo finished dressing. When she joined us, I was astonished at her fine appearance. She was dressed in plum-colored satin and wore a quantity of jewelry — two gold rings, a beautiful jade ring, and a long jade hairpin. A-doo and the daughter-in-law rode in rickshas, while we rode in the carriage. I had hardly recognized the daughter-in-law in her best clothes

of black satin lined with turquoise blue, and her many gold bracelets and pearl ornaments. The carriage crossed Nanking Road, drove around the Race Course, and took the road to the Native City.

"I had no idea they lived so far away," exclaimed Doctor Donnellon. "I imagined they were just around the corner."

"I thought there were no carriage roads in the Native City," I said. "The other day we saw nothing but alleys."

"These horse roads are new and have been cut through since the Revolution," answered Doctor Donnellon. "When I first came out, a carriage in the Native City was an unheard-of thing."

We entered by the New North Gate cut through the wall a year ago. A three-storied temple with ancient casement windows of leaded glass clung to the inner side of the wall. The road, though wide enough for our small coupé, barely allowed a ricksha to squeeze past us, while it would have been quite impossible to turn or to pass another vehicle. A footman ran at the horse's head shouting and clearing the way, "The horse carriage comes, The horse carriage comes." As we penetrated the city more deeply the road narrowed till the wheels of the wagon scraped the walls of the houses. Suddenly we were stopped by a Chinese policeman. The footman and coachman and policeman had a heated conversation, which ended by the footman dashing on ahead.

"I suppose that driving through this street is

against 'Old Custom'," said Doctor Donnellon, "and the footman has gone on ahead to collect enough money to bribe the policeman."

We became at once the center of a closely packed crowd, very good-natured and laughing but intensely personal. Men with youngsters perched astride their shoulders, women with baskets of food, and numberless children clustered around us.

"See, the outside-kingdom woman wears her clothes inside out," laughed a young girl, pointing at Doctor Donnellon's coat which was made with the fur on the outside.

"She, I think, is the Elder Sister," continued the loquacious one, "while the small one is the Little Sister. The Little Sister has no earrings, but she has round pieces of gold in two teeth. I myself prefer gold in the ears."

"What a pity she has such a very big nose," remarked an old woman, peering at me over the young girl's shoulder. "I am sure her feet are large too."

"Really, this is awful, Doctor Donnellon," I said desperately. "I never imagined I would mind it, but it grows embarrassing after a while. You never know what they will say next."

"They say anything they please," said Doctor Donnellon, "and it never ends. They keep on and on, and it grows worse and worse. At a new station in the interior, the Chinese just swarm over the mission-house like ants in an ant hill. They line the dining room wall to watch the missionaries eat, they enter the bedroom to see the quality of the beds,

and they often try to watch the novel and dangerous process of bathing, immersed in a tub."

Doctor Donnellon leaned out of the window and began conversing with the crowd.

"From where has she such clear words?" I heard the old hag exclaim. "Her doctrine is truly good to hear, but her clothes are very ugly to look upon."

Her attitude astounded me. Would I ever be able to foretell the Oriental point of view?

After a half an hour or so of waiting, the footman returned, the policeman was appropriately mollified, and we proceeded unmolested on our way.

The bridegroom's house opened directly upon the street. A wide gate in a high wall led into a shallow courtyard which was separated by a few steps from the main guest hall. This was a high, raftered room whose walls were hung from ceiling to floor with banners of scarlet satin. Heavily embroidered gold characters ran up and down the banners, proclaiming "Long Life and Happiness" and many other blessings in the shape of riches and sons. In the center of the wall facing the door stood a polished redwood table on which were placed the ceremonial candles and offerings. The seats of honor for the Chinese guests were placed along the sides of the room, a table and a chair, a table and a chair, in strict and orderly sequence against the wall. Each table and chair was covered with a cloth of crimson satin also heavily embroidered with threads of gold and black. The side of the room facing the court was entirely open. Four slender, round columns supported the roof. Dwarf peach trees and mimosas in ancient porcelain

flower bowls of blue and white stood in the corners of the court by the shallow steps. Standing on the threshold to greet us was the sprightly old dowager and her four handsome sons, all sumptuously dressed in brocaded Chinese satins.

It was a scene of bygone days of splendor, of the ancient, clannish, patriarchal life of the forgotten past. The gorgeousness and harmony of the picture took my breath away. I could not have imagined anything more effective than that wide, open room, with its high, sloping ceiling and its riotous crimson and gold walls.

Doctor Donnellon looked at me triumphantly.

"I thought you would be pleasantly surprised," she said. "Wait till you have seen the bride's trousseau."

A host of household servants, coolies, amahs, and children, were constantly coming and going. We were ushered into a small reception room to rest and refresh ourselves. Sweetmeats were placed before us — sugared lotus buds, and watermelon seeds, and puffed rice candy. We sat about the little, marble-topped tables and nibbled the sweets and made the conventional inquiries. Then we were led to the bride's apartment. She had arrived the night before.

We entered a long room in which a young girl was standing alone. One arm hung at her side, and the other was stretched up along the parted curtains of the nuptial bed. She was immaculately dressed and rouged and bejeweled. Her oval face, with its high cheek bones and low-bridged nose, gave that illusive,

Oriental appearance of calm. She gave me an impression of immense isolation. Yet she was utterly composed and knew exactly what was expected of her in the traditional position of bride. The dowager mother-in-law, the three other daughters-in-law, and numerous young granddaughters accompanied us.

"Don't be afraid to look at everything. Touch and examine things," Doctor Donnellon said to me. "They will be disappointed if you don't. Think of what your very best manners are and then do the opposite."

Thus emboldened, I turned towards the bed where the young girl was still standing immobile. It was of deeply glowing redwood, lovely as the loveliest mahogany, carved and hung with silken curtains. On one side the curtains were looped back with heavy silver chains, the hook shaped like a hand with clasping fingers. Many bright-colored balls and fantastic ornaments hung from the curtain rods.

"What a comfort it is to be so frankly materialistic," Doctor Donnellon said, "and not to have to pretend one only cares for the giver of a present."

"Yes, it is simpler," I laughed.

The old mother-in-law proudly displayed the bride to us, her ruddy cheeks, her health, her many pearl ornaments and gold bracelets. The bride, immobile and silent, suffered it all. Along one side of the wall from floor to ceiling were piled her trunks, handsome boxes of polished wood with hoops of beaten brass. Over each keyhole was a beaten brass butterfly

with spread wings whose body moved aside to disclose the keyhole.

"What is the meaning of the shiny balls hanging along the bed?" I asked.

"They are all best wishes for the safe arrival of sons," explained Doctor Donnellon. "I suppose you think it is a little early to think about sons, but sons are the one thought and aim of a Chinese marriage. The bride knows it as well as the groom. Getting married and having children is the business of life, and they set about it in a most business-like, matter-of-fact way."

Of course I had known all this before, but I realized it more acutely when I saw the young bride standing by the bedside in the house of her husband. I felt a sudden revulsion against this brutal Chinese attitude. Materialists, sensualists, I called them to myself. When we left the bride's room, she was standing again by the curtains of the bed, gazing after us with her inscrutable eyes. During our entire visit she had not spoken a word. Was she merely a living image, a symbol of an ancient rite, or a young girl, aquiver with life, curbed by the iron custom of years into that attitude of strange impassivity! I wanted to speak to her alone, to touch her hand, to make her smile. I wondered if endearments and caresses would change her back into something quick and responsive, or would she always remain so, silent, motionless, gazing at us with her soft brown eyes.

Of course I never spoke to her. I had no chance. The old dowager carried us off to show us the rest

of the house, and she was left there alone, standing by her bedside, in the quiet of the empty room, waiting till the next visitors came to look her over. She haunted me. While I looked at all the beautiful things that were shown to us, I kept on thinking of her. How strange are our fates! If she bore sons she would be happy! There she waited the test of life. Did she think? Did she feel? Or was she concentrated in merely waiting? I never saw her again.

At last the feast began. The old dowager and her two eldest daughters-in-law ate with us. The men ate in a room apart.

"Where are the bride and groom?" I asked.

"For one month they have the privilege of eating alone together in the bride's apartment," the dowager replied.

My mind leaped upon that reply. What would the young girl find to say to this man she had never seen before, she who had never spoken to a man alone in her whole life? How mysterious everyday events are!

"What beautiful ivory chopsticks," Doctor Donnellon exclaimed, much to the delight of the family, who wished everything to be effusively admired. I watched Doctor Donnellon enviously. She used her chopsticks as if born to them. Mine wobbled around hopelessly in my fingers. Foreseeing such a contingency, a silver fork, made like a hairpin with an extra prong for a handle, was given to me. I speared the morsels on it and nibbled from them as daintily as I could.

The feast was indeed marvelous. All the well-known dishes were served — the meat and vegetable salad called "The Mandarin's Hat", "The Eight Precious Pudding" with its dates and raisins, innumerable small omelets, meat patties, pigeon eggs, wild duck, fried batter, and last of all rice and tea.

"I really and truly can't eat another mouthful," I said in despair to Doctor Donnellon.

"Never mind, you don't have to eat the rice," she said. "It is quite polite to leave it, as that shows that the feast has been so ample and delicious that you do not need the rice to complete your meal."

As a sign that she had finished, Doctor Donnellon waved her chopsticks in the air and laid them down across her bowl of rice, uttering the customary phrase of Chinese etiquette, "Use slowly", to the rest. The old dowager lifted the chopsticks from across the bowl and placed them on the table as a sign that Doctor Donnellon was urged to eat more, saying insistently, "Eat plenty." After this ceremony had been performed by each member of the party and the tea drunk, the feast was over. The family, the children, and their servitors all crowded into the great guest hall to see us off. The gate man bolted the door in the wall behind us, shutting in the splendor of the crimson-hung room, and we were again in the narrow, muddy alley in the Chinese City. As we passed along by the windowless walls, I wondered what strange spectacles were to be seen behind their jealous doors, and I fell to dreaming about the hidden, mysterious life going on so remorselessly and stealthily behind those closed gates.

Doctor Donnellon roused me by a sigh of relief. "I'm glad it's over," she said. "It is a tremendous strain to be polite according to Chinese etiquette for four hours."

On Nanking Road I saw Edward striding along briskly towards St. Margaret's hospital.

"If you don't mind, I'll get out and walk with Mr. Stevens," I said. "I feel like a stuffed pig." A few minutes later Edward and I were swinging along together, and I had launched into a full description of the feast.

"I wish I had been there," exclaimed Edward enthusiastically. "They must be a pretty rich old family. I delight in the frank pleasure these old codgers take in their possessions. They are far more sincere than we."

"I didn't feel that way," I said. "I was oppressed, weighed down, by their evident worship of things. Their accumulation of objects stifled me."

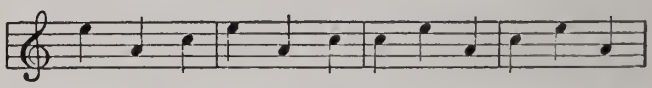
Edward smiled one of his wise smiles, and I felt myself blushing, for I had spoken with some heat.

"You are betraying one of your handicaps in life, Wilhelmina," he said, looking at me with tender eyes, "your spirituality. Spirituality is, in all truth, 'other worldliness.' People with a love for things have a firmer grip on the life of this everyday world. Now, take me, for instance; I would make a good anchor for you."

VIII

THE SONG OF THE COOLIES

"YOU might as well marry Edward Stevens at once and be done with it," said Doctor Donnellon.

We had made evening rounds together and were standing on the wide second-story verandah overlooking the compound. Behind us on the porch was a row of beds containing the cases of bone and gland tuberculosis. Before us lay the brief breathing space of the compound's grass plot, walled in by a mass of Chinese houses. Their peaked roofs cut across the purple, silver-spangled sky in fantastic outlines. As we stood by the railing listening, I heard the palm leaves softly rattling against each other. From a near-by alley came the weird, insistent song of a "carry coolie":

Flung out into the night the notes dominated the air.

"Well, why don't you?" Doctor Donnellon repeated.

Without turning my head, I answered. "I don't want to marry at all. It's quite another thing for a

man. It is no deprivation, no loss, merely a gratification, and an expansion. For women it is different. Marriage is the fundamental self-sacrifice. It means the giving up of conscious, individual life; it means wilfully stepping out of the wild, up-rushing, tingling current of modern activity to merge oneself into the slow growth of the race. I can't do it," I cried. "I won't."

"Marriage is the function of woman," insisted Doctor Donnellon.

"Not of all women," I objected.

"Making babies is their one perfect art," she added softly.

"If more women refused to expend all their vitality in making babies, they would have enough left for art," I retorted.

"Is art more necessary than babies?" Doctor Donnellon asked. "Is any work of art as perfectly beautiful as a new-born babe?"

We stood in the silence of the evening. Not a sound of civilization struck our ears. Then, the coolie's cry, which had ceased a moment, began again. I listened till it grew fainter and fainter in the distance. His was the song of the burden bearers.

"Do you remember Wadsworth's Lucy poems?" I asked, suddenly turning to Doctor Donnellon. "'Whirled round with rocks and stones and all inanimate, insensate things in the mighty cosmic circle.' I think of marriage like that."

Doctor Donnellon laid her hand on my shoulder and stooped to peer into my eyes.

"Try it, child," she said. "We are all torn by the ineradicable desire."

As I followed her silently down the ward, I recalled my surprise when I first saw a ward in a Chinese hospital. Whiteness had grown so identical with cleanliness in my mind that the many-colored ward startled me — black bedsteads, blue quilts, pink walls. To-night, this color scheme seemed to me the most natural in the world. Besides, I liked it. I found myself liking everything in the hospital with a strange intensity, as one does who will soon leave.

About a week later Edward and I went off for a long walk through the winding paths between the fields. The rape was ripe and covered the whole earth with its golden blossoms like a cloak.

"You ought to get out more often, Wilhelmina," said Edward. "You are very pale."

"You mean 'as sallow as a duck's foot'," I answered, laughing. "But really I get out at least one afternoon a week, which is more than I could be sure of at home."

You can't compare America with China," Edward answered. "In America, the air itself is electricity. It's a penalty to loaf. Here, it's an insidious lethargy that makes all work double the effort. No one can work here as he does at home. It's preposterous."

"No one does," I answered wistfully, remembering the merry days when I too was a part of the giddy whirl.

"Americans are the only busy people on the earth,"

continued Edward, well launched on a favorite hobby of his.

I walked ahead on the narrow footpath with Edward close behind me. I heard his voice dreamily, hardly noticing the words, or their import. My eyes wandered idly over the wide plains, studded here and there with a low hut encircled in black cypresses. At one small group of houses we found the women out hanging up cotton thread to dry. They stretched it on a series of T-shaped sticks, several of them working together. The children, sociable and jolly, played around their skirts. Little streams meandered by, and we crossed them on ancient, primeval stepping-stones made of great slabs, rude and strong enough for the days of the Pharaohs. Now and then a wolfish cur ran out at us. The chimneys of Shanghai were but a smudge on the horizon. We were plunged in hoary antiquity. It was not only due to the different landscape and the clothes and occupations of the people, but more than anything else it was due to the look on their faces. They were utterly different, alien, soaked with the life of the earth, quick with the change of the seasons, strangely happy. I looked at them wonderingly, marvelling at their happiness. So far apart were we thrust by the centuries that our minds could only touch at the elemental points of bodily sensations. I wondered if I too could drop back, could forget the present and touch, as they did, the strange, illusive, subtle forces of nature. Edward's voice startled me out of my day dream.

"Here we are at the Creek," he said. "Shall we hail a boat and float down instead of walking back?"

We had emerged at a ferry landing. Smooth stone slabs supported on wooden piles led from the high bank to the water. I suddenly felt tired.

"Yes," I answered simply.

"Sit here," said Edward, folding his coat into a cushion. "We may not be able to get a boat at once — one clean enough, I mean."

He ran down the steps to parley with the ferryman. From the rape fields behind me came the faint, distant "song of the coolies", growing clearer and sharper. Soon five men emerged from the path, carrying baskets of cabbage slung on bamboo poles across their shoulders. I watched them file down the stone stairway and step carefully on to the ferry. The ferryman, a boy of about sixteen, poled them across. A cool draft of air was wafted up from the yellow-brown water. Beside me was a battered temple in which sat a forsaken Buddha in his attitude of eternal calm, with knees crossed and smiling vermilion lips. A pervasive mystery exuded from this decayed temple, from the swaying rape seed, and the swiftly flowing river. For ages and eons of time it had been the same. I seemed to sink into this universal life, to be swallowed up by it.

"Here comes a cleanish junk," called Edward.

I ran down the flight of stone slabs and stepped on the ferry. It poled out to midstream and drew up alongside the chosen junk, and we easily jumped across. The boat, long and narrow, was taking garden truck to the Shanghai markets. The

vegetables were piled in a sunken cradle in the center of the boat. Two men were working side by side at the long stern oar.

"This is much cleaner than most of them," said Edward. "We were lucky."

I made no reply; I was tongue-tied. In silence we seated ourselves in the prow of the boat. I felt more and more unreal, as I watched the house boats tugged up stream, each boat accommodating one or two families in its one small cabin. The faces that looked out at me were strange, like the faces seen in a fantastic nightmare.

"What's the matter, Wilhelmina?" Edward asked. "I believe you are completely tired out. In the name of thunder, why won't you marry me? I would make of my love for you a wall to protect you from all weariness and sorrow. Why won't you understand?"

Edward leaned closer, and his face too became as one of the dream faces.

"It's you who don't understand," I whispered.

The junk swept around a bend in the stream. The link with the past was snapped, and the present, with all its immediate urgency, rushed upon us. Just as we turned the corner we saw a house boat with a pretentious, enclosed cabin slowly and sedately turn turtle.

Our rowers dropped their oars and rushed forward, shrieking wildly. Several other boats began to float around aimlessly, while their occupants screamed and yelled. In the midst of the stream the overturned, flat-bottomed boat floated serenely. No

sound came from within it. I wondered if the imprisoned family were screaming.

"Make the idiots stop yelling, can't you, Wilhelmina," said Edward. "We must get there at once and chop those fellows out."

"Won't the boat turn back?" I asked.

"It can't," Edward answered. "The roof must be caught in the muddy bottom."

My lethargy dropped away. I shouted at the coolies in dialect, and they pushed our boat beside the upturned hulk. From a second junk Edward got an ax. Leaping upon the boat, he began to chop at the wooden planks. Up and down the creek, the hollow sound of the falling ax echoed and re-echoed.

"Confound the wood," Edward growled. "It must be teak. It's as hard as stone."

Two Chinese sprang across from a junk that had just arrived, they and Edward took turns chopping. Their faces grew red from exertion, and streams of water dripped from their hands.

"We'll be too late," Edward cried. "She's filling. I feel her settle."

As if to answer his fear, a cry penetrated the wooden walls of the cabin and floated up through the water. The next crash of Edward's ax cut an air hole through. After the first opening was made, the wood splintered in all directions. Edward plunged in his hand and caught a Chinaman's arm. While the other men continued ripping and tearing at the planks, Edward pulled the fellow out through the hole. I shall never forget the sheer fright

depicted on his face — eyes rolled upwards, lips blue, and every inch of hair on his close-cropped head standing erect.

"How many more inside?" I called to him.

He held up two fingers.

No sooner were his feet out of the hole than a second Chinese face appeared. This man was fat. After he had poked his head and shoulders through, the rest of his body stuck. At the sight, the spectators began to laugh uncontrollably. Edward threw down his ax and held his sides with laughter. The fat, terrified man, hanging by his armpits, made a ridiculous figure. Suddenly I remembered there was a third inside.

"Hurry, Edward, pull him out," I cried. "There is another one inside. Don't waste so much time. The last one will drown."

The two Chinese began tugging at the outstretched arms of the fat man. A sound of loud ripping and tearing of cloth rewarded their efforts. The next instant they jerked out a comparatively thin man, leaving his cocoon of padded garments stuck like a cork in the opening. He promptly collapsed upon the roof. Edward and I tore away his clothes and peered into the hole. At first we could distinguish nothing, but as our eyes grew accustomed to the semi-darkness, we saw that about three feet of air space remained above the surface of the water. Stools and tables and eating bowls were floating about, bobbing against each other.

"I see no one," said Edward, drawing back.

"How many inside?" I again asked the rescued men.

Simultaneously they each held up one finger.

"Must catchee one piecee woman," said the first.

"Never mind. Belong second wife," added the second.

As Edward caught their meaning, he quickly began taking off his coat and shoes. While I watched him prepare to dive into that submerged room, I suddenly knew that I loved him, and the knowledge filled me with a strange terror and a strange pride.

Edward let himself down feet foremost. A moment his fingers clung to the opening, then they too disappeared, and I heard a dull splash in the cabin. I knelt at the hole. I believe some one held my feet to prevent my falling in. I stared at the heavy darkness till my eyes blinked with tears. At last, when I could scarcely see, I realized that Edward's head had appeared at the surface of the water. The next moment he raised himself shoulder high and dragged up the form of an unconscious woman.

"I can't lift her," he called. "I am standing on a stool on a table, and it's very shaky. Throw me a rope. Quick. I am afraid she is too far gone. She was lying on the bottom covered by the bed."

"A rope! A rope!" I called to the Chinese. In despair I wondered where I could find a rope in the middle of Soochow Creek. But I had forgotten the ways of the river. A boy shinned up the mast of the next boat and deftly detached the tow rope from its summit. The tow-man on the shore stepped out of his harness, and in a second a long

strong rope was ready. The men lowered an end to Edward.

"Ready, pull," he called, but be careful. She is unconscious."

When the men had drawn the woman out, I too was sure she was dead. But "once a doctor, always a doctor." My hypodermic case, as usual, was in my wrist bag. After an injection I began artificial respiration. Before I knew it, Edward was beside me, helping with the rhythmic, swinging motions of her arms. I was oblivious of all but the unconscious woman lying on the planks of the upturned boat. Her face was immobile and pallid as a death mask, but her heart was still beating. Gradually a faint pink tinge spread over her lips and finger tips. Then my attention relaxed, and I suddenly became conscious that our boat was the center of a closely packed flotilla of junks from which hundreds of bright brown eyes scrutinized us with interested curiosity. Coolies, with their burdens resting at their feet, were ranged along both banks. In the distance the song of approaching coolies grew more and more distinct.

Never till I die will I forget that song of the coolies, monotonous, insistent, throbbing with a hidden power, the song of the burden bearers of the earth. At that moment I merged myself with them.

The girl drew a hesitating, fluttering breath. The bystanders gave a triumphant shout. I straightened myself and walked back to our hired boat. Slowly the impacted mass of junks wormed itself apart. Once again Edward and I, sitting on the prow of our

boat, drifted down stream towards Shanghai. I was tired and leaned against Edward's shoulder in an abandonment of content.

"Do you love me?" he murmured into my ear.

"I don't know," I answered. "But I am glad it's decided. The rest doesn't matter."

Along the shore path, the coolies hurried back and forth, carrying their ceaseless burdens, singing ever the same, weird, monotonous song, the Song of the Burden Bearers of the East.

IX

THE WARM GRAVE

COURTING is just as happy a time for a girl in China as anywhere else under the sun. All the world seemed to aid and abet us. If Edward so much as called for afternoon tea, as soon as the tea was drunk everybody would fade away from the room, leaving Edward and me together. I found it a little strange at first, but I must confess that I liked it. On the whole it was an excellent plan. It seemed as if all the world were pushing us together — not only the people, Doctor Donnellon and Miss Laurie, but all the inanimate Chinese things about us.

My importance was greatly heightened in the eyes of the nurses. "When will you be married?" I was asked a dozen times a day. I always said I didn't know, which surprised them very much. As soon as a Chinese girl is betrothed, her marriage month is set. Once I heard them whispering among themselves. "Astonishing! Is it not strange? She does not know when she is to be married."

But I didn't want to know. The world suited me to a T. I didn't want it changed one iota. Loving Edward seemed to make a great difference

in me. It seemed somehow to make me more a part of the rest of the world, even more a part of China, as if I had suddenly found a key to understanding. Before I had only looked through a peephole at life; now I was inside.

One evening Edward came to take me driving in one of the small Chinese victorias. It was well along in June, and the days and nights were both warm. All our woolen things had been hung out on the second-story porch long ago to sun, before the willow fuzz began to fly, and then had been carefully put away in camphorwood or tin boxes for the summer. Even in the evenings we only needed a light silk scarf. The Chinese men had discarded all semblance of upper garments for the summer, and the women on the street wore transparent gauze skirts over their thin summer trousers. Punkahs and electric fans waved during meals, and at night we slept out on the upstairs porch on bamboo couches without any covers. In the daytime we rested when work was over. Only at night could one enjoy motion.

I never get over a feeling of opulence when I lean back in a victoria, no matter how shaky the vehicle or how shabby the driver.

"Don't keep her out too late," warned Doctor Donnellon. "We have a hard operation to-morrow morning, and we must all be fresh for it."

"We won't be long," said Edward. "We are going out along Soochow Creek and back by the Rubicon Road."

The Rubicon is the last outlying ribbon of foreign

influence around Shanghai. Across it lie the pathless fields of China itself.

On the shafts of the carriage hung two large, illumined, paper lanterns, shedding a fitful colored light on the ground at the horse's head. The streets were a mass of rickshas and people. Children, amply dressed in a red handkerchief, played by the roadside. At the doorways of the houses sat little family groups, the father mayhap with the youngest baby perched astride his shoulder. Here and there a man was playing the primitive violin of the people. Its wailing, plaintive notes hung like a subtle enchantment on the air. We passed a boy blowing a flute, driving home to the stables a herd of unwieldy buffaloes. Their huge, humped, black silhouettes were unreal in the night. We turned down Myburgh Road and out on to the thoroughfare of Bubbling Well. There foreign motor cars mingled with the rickshas. A handsome Sikh policeman saluted me as we passed.

"How do you know him?" asked Edward.

"Oh! I know half the policemen in town. First of all, they bring their wives to St. Margaret's for treatment, and secondly they bring in a lot of municipal cases. But this man is a special friend of mine. He thinks I saved the life of his wife."

Edward smiled at me, and I felt a warm rush of happiness tingle through me.

"I had such a queer sensation when he came to take her away. She was standing in the hospital court with her baby in her arms. They were both dressed in some gaudy color and wrapped up to the

eyes. The Sikh, very tall and imposing in his municipal uniform of blue serge, said something rapidly to the woman that I couldn't understand. She nodded her head. The next moment he was on the ground, kissing my feet. I felt humble and elated at the same moment. The homage woke up a primitive feeling of delight in power over people. I was rather scared to find how much I enjoyed it."

Along the road, the houses stood wide open to the fragrant night air. We could look right in and see groups of men and women in white on the verandahs. Opposite the Burlington Hotel, a long row of plastered Chinese houses was overflowing with Chinese children. An eat-shop next door was doing a good business. Then we left the city behind us and drove out rapidly into the country. We passed through Zau-Ka-Doo, where the silk filatures were silent for the night, and came out beside Soochow Creek. At once the air blew cool and damp in our faces. The lights of the city and houses gone, the world seemed to grow in immensity and stretch away infinitely under the moon. I imagined it stretching away and away till it touched Russia and America, joining hands across the continent. Down the silent river the junks, with their tall, oblong sails, floated mysteriously. Now and then the creak of an oar came to our ears, or the harsh call of the ferryman. Willows grew along the bank, and a pale silver moon hung in the sky.

"I'd like to go on and on along this road, Edward," I said. "I don't want to turn off from the Creek. The fields without the water are meaningless. I

AT THE TRINKET STALL

feel that if we could only go on, we would come to some secret. I've always had to turn back and go home. Some day I want to just go right on and never come back."

"Some day you shall," he promised, "but not to-night. In spite of all the wisdom tucked away inside your head, I know a thing or two you haven't found out yet. Life has no secrets just around the corner. All the secrets of life are inside us."

"No, it's not that kind of a surprise I want," I replied. "I want something to happen to me from the outside. I don't want to have to evolve it from my inner consciousness."

A carry coolie along the roadside passed us, going in the other direction, humming his strange two notes beneath his breath. It is a sound that always takes my breath away.

"Never mind, dear," I said, "I'm satisfied."

Junk after junk moved past us noiselessly. Phantoms they were, coming from the unknown, going to the unknown, all palpitating with life. Tree toads sang along the road, and their soft, throaty gurgle filled me with a strange unrest. One sleepless "Sau-Sau-Man-Hau" bird cried out across the plains like the sudden night call of a loon. We came to the bend in the road where it leaves the Creek and turns back towards Shanghai through the fields. This road is a small, winding road, supposed to be kept in repair by the municipal council. A run of water, edged with steep banks, borders one side. Across that run is China, un-foreignized, eternal, just as it was centuries ago. I remember,

when I was little, going to the circus in Madison Square Garden and seeing a man ride two horses at once. He stood with a foot on each and galloped. When I wanted to think of something thrilling, I remembered that ride. Missionaries in China are like that, one foot in the twentieth century and one in the ages B.C. Only that little run of clear water separated the two. And we on our side that night looked back to the past and caught our breaths in wonder.

Quite a lot of people were going along the road, both men and women, and of course children. They chattered and gesticulated. Their lanterns of red and yellow, hung on the ends of slender, bamboo canes, bobbed up and down as they walked. A few were well dressed, but for the most part they were of the coolie class and clad in the blue clothes of the workers.

"I wonder where they are all going?"

"Ask the driver," suggested Edward. "I am curious too."

"Why for all these many people," I said to the driver in pidgin.

"Me no savvy," he answered.

"Ask, ask, find out," I ordered.

He called out to a tall man hurrying by, who answered in quick jargon, unintelligible to me. The driver twisted around on his seat to answer with evident excitement. "One father, he die. Belong one very good man. Son, good man too. To-night, he warm his father's grave."

"What?" I cried.

"Missey come look see," he answered.

We followed the crowds about a mile down the road. They then crossed the run on a bridge of flat stepping-stones and vanished into the silvery darkness of the field beyond. The coachman turned around eagerly. "Missey come too?" he said.

At first Edward wouldn't go. He said he was afraid for me, though why he need be afraid for me, I don't know, when I am never afraid for myself. Men are incomprehensible creatures! For a while I really thought he wouldn't let me go. I didn't want to quarrel, but neither did I want to sit there in that carriage and not see what was going on, on the other side. My old feelings of rebellion began to perk their heads up, but they weren't needed. While our carriage waited at the roadside, we saw a procession of lanterns coming down behind us. When they drew near, we saw that they were a company of priests in long gray robes, carrying drums and short sticks which they struck together like castanets. One by one the priests crossed the little run on the century-old slabs of stone, then they too vanished into the silvery mistiness of the field beyond. But now the meadow was not silent. It vibrated to the rhythmic throb of the drums and the stick-like castanets.

The driver wriggled about on his seat. "Missey no come?" he inquired. "Never mind. Can do, Missey, Master, come look see."

He jumped down from the box, and I followed suit. By this time, I think that Edward's natural

curiosity had overcome his scruples. Without a word of objection he followed us.

I climbed down the steep bank to the water's edge and stepped out, across, on the flat stones. They were solid as the very earth itself, Druid-like and ancient. Across them countless farmers and country folk had crossed the Rubicon into Civilization. I tried to put myself into their minds, to grasp the wonder and daring of thus rashly venturing out of the snug past into the wild wonder of the present. I tried and I failed. My own point of view rushed back upon me. Here was I, a modern as I liked to think, stepping back into the untold ages of antiquity. After all it was as wonderful as their stepping out. And one thing I had gained, in that one particular I was ahead — I was quivering with consciousness. O! I don't mean of myself, but of the world. I suppose a lark mounts and sings from an inner, sublime instinct, but if a man were thus to mount and sing, it would be with an ecstasy of joy. I felt that these silent, shadowy folk were as primitive as the birds of the air.

I crossed the little stream and went up the opposite bank by a narrow footpath into the rice fields beyond. As soon as we had gained the level of the field, we saw the people like a dense shadow near a circle of cypress trees at the farther end of the meadow. The field was thickly studded with grave mounds, little, lonely ones of babies and family groups of twos and threes. "Tsing Ming" was but lately past, and the tops of the graves were bare of grass. At "Tsing Ming" the families go to the graves of their

ancestors and pull off all the grass that has grown during the past year, leaving only a little tuft on the top, so that the grave shall look fresh. On the peak of the grave thus made bald, the offerings of food and paper money are placed. The group of cypresses towards which we were making our way surrounded a pretentious family burying mound.

"Makee quick," urged the coachman. "Want-chee look see."

He broke into a soft run, and I hurried after him.

The cypresses grew up straight and slender around a group of three mounds. The people were clustered close around the edge of the enclosure. The priests were grouped at one end. A fresh grave was just dug. The earth lay piled up at one side in a moist brown heap. Two coolies, still sweating and wiping their eyes, stood at one side beside their shovels. We joined the crowd unnoticed; the priests were already chanting. Out on the misty, silvery quietness of the night floated their ancient incantation, the prayer for a blessing for the dead. The lighted lanterns glowed in splashes of red and yellow light. With intense interest the crowd watched the priests. Heathen and ancient as the human race itself was this prayer for the dead. And if Our Lord has said that not one sparrow falls to the ground without His compassion, so must His love flow out over this heathen grave. I ceased to feel alien and strange, a spectator; rather I felt I was a part of the mourning crowd.

Little rustlings of the night wind crept through the knee-high rice stalks. The clouds seemed to

lean close and whisper as they rushed across the moon, now throwing the scene into sudden light, and now hiding it in dusky gloom. The priests chanted, and the acolytes beat their drums and wooden sticks. The sound seemed to be arriving at a frenzied climax.

Then I suddenly saw that all eyes were directed toward a young man who stood a little before the rest at the very edge of the grave. He wore the unbleached sackcloth of a first mourner. An old woman stood near him, holding a small child in her arms.

The music came to an end, and the high priest said a few words. I didn't catch their meaning, but a thrill ran through me, as the tones of his voice vibrated commandingly over the company. The moon rushed behind a thick cloud. Some of the lanterns had burnt out, only two or three still glowed through their fragile paper frames. A weird, ominous stillness fell on the group. I too held my breath, and a sudden terror and horror filled me. I put out my hand and caught Edward's. His fingers were warm and felt comforting to my cold ones.

The young man whom everybody was watching suddenly knelt on the ground before the priests and struck his head against the earth thrice. I had no idea of what was to follow. When he rose he turned toward the open grave and jumped swiftly into its depths. A shuddering sigh, almost a stifled laugh, swept through the crowd. The chanting of the priests broke out again. The

people began to stir about, as if their paralyzed limbs had suddenly come to life. Here and there one lighted a new candle in his lantern. A few stragglers started off back across the fields. The priests wound three times around the grave with its living human occupant, then off across the zigzag path through the rice field. Most of the people followed. The woman carrying the baby and an amah nurse or two accompanying her, still lingered. The voices of the throng which had crossed back over the Rubicon to the outskirts of the foreign settlement floated out clearly on the night air. The woman leaned over the edge of the grave.

"Are you all right," she called. "Is it cold in the grave?"

"It's very cold. I feel the chill of death creeping over my bones. However, it is of no importance. I will warm the grave for my father's body. He shall never feel the chill of death. I will warm it with my warm blood. Go home, Great Mother, and sleep till dawn. I will be waiting for your coming with the sunshine in the morning. Lift up my son, my first-born, that he may see the filialness of his father and remember."

The voice from the grave ceased. The woman at the edge of the grave lifted up the child and held it out over the hole in the earth. Its baby eyes wandered away and up to the pretty moonshine above its head. It refused to look down into the grave.

"Till to-morrow, with the sun," said the voice of the Filial Son. At last the mother and her little

cortège filed away across the fields. We stood alone under the shade of the cypresses. It seemed too terrible for every one to go away to warm beds and hot tea and leave that young man out there in the silent rice field, shut in by the high walls of the freshly dug grave, all alone in the darkness.

"Come," said the driver, tugging at my sleeve. "Missey must come away. It no belong good custom for any one to stay by the warm grave. It no belong proper."

"But suppose something should happen to him," I cried.

The coachman shrugged his shoulders. "What thing can happen?" he asked in scorn. "No man touchee he. He belong one piecee very holy son. Never mind! Come away. No can stay by warm grave. The devils can catch."

"What devils," I asked.

"Oh, any devils, bad devils! No likee son warm grave. Go round and round on the outside to catch son if he get up too soon. Hear."

The man held up his hand and poised his head to listen. The night wind was rising and moaning through the stiff branches of the cypresses.

"I hear the devils already," he stammered. "Missey makee quick. Come away."

He caught at my dress and pulled me along the path.

"It's useless to stay, Wilhelmina," said Edward. "It's dangerous to interfere with the native customs. Besides, there is no real danger to the fellow, not any more than to any soldier who sleeps on the ground all night."

Edward caught my hand and hurried me along, back to civilization, through the twisting path in the rice fields, over the brook by the Druid stones and into our bit of modernity, the diminutive victoria.

"Drive back chop chop," thundered Edward. "It will be midnight before we get back, and it will create a scandal in the mission."

His orders were unnecessary to the Chinese coachman. At full gallop we tore down the river road, nor did he slacken his pace till we were well within the lights of the settlement. As I lay in my warm, white-sheeted bed that night, I couldn't sleep. My thoughts ran away with me. I seemed to float out of myself and stream out over the little run at the Rubicon, over the rice field, and pause under the black wings of the cypress trees. The moon shadows flickered over the open grave where the son lay warming the cold earth for the bones of his father. The baffled devils whispered in the cypress needles, and from the edge of the stream came the sleepy croak of the tree toads. I wondered was He listening too? And was it very cold in the grave? So dreaming, I fell asleep at last.

X

THE SLAVE REFUGE AT KAUNG WAN

THE rebellion was in full sway. For three days the rebels had been bombarding the arsenal. All our Christians from The Native City and all the patients that were too sick to go home from the West Gate Hospital had crowded into our compound. Mattresses were hauled down from the attic and stretched on the floor between the beds. Families brought their bedding and spread it in the yard and slept. Children slept two by two, feet to feet in the cribs. All our dearly beloved law and order vanished. We simply took in everybody we could, and in the midst of it tried to do the most needed medical work. But everybody was demoralized. In the midst of a dressing, the nurses would pause to listen to the patter of distant shots. Now and then the very earth seemed to tremble. Doctor Donnellon and I went about among the crowds, saying continually, "Do not fear; do not fear." I believe if we had been suddenly wakened from our sleep we would automatically have said, "Do not fear." Fortunately the weather was pleasant. We heard that a bullet had gone right through the wall above the head of the Doctor at West Gate. It whizzed across the room

and buried itself in the opposite wall. "Loo-I-Sung", as the Chinese call her, was in danger, and our little band of refugees was tormented with fear for her. She refused to leave the hospital, as there were still a few patients too sick to be moved. After it was all over I dined with her in the room still riddled with bullet holes. But here at St. Margaret's we were safe. A wild shot or two flew overhead, but none fell in our compound.

One evening — it was the third day of the bombardment — we were sitting on the verandah, listening to the far-off patter of bullets, when the telephone rang shrilly. Edward rose to answer it.

"It is no use your going," I said. "It's sure to be some one asking about a patient, and I might as well go at once."

"Very well," said Edward.

It was Miss Judson at the Door of Hope. She wanted some one to go down to the Slave Refuge at Kaung Wan to relieve Miss Fairchild, who had come down with dysentery. The orphanage for the younger girls was at Kaung Wan near the Woosung forts. Up till now all the fighting had been about the Arsenal at the west of the settlement. Miss Judson thought the children would be perfectly safe with their Chinese teachers, but she didn't like to feel there was no one in charge in such uncertain times. Did I think any one could be spared?

"I can come," I answered. "I was supposed to go away on a vacation, but no one can get away just now. We aren't able to do any proper medical

work, but spend our time dosing out sedatives. I'll love to come."

So it was arranged, and I went down the next day to take charge. The building is a square, barrack-like affair of gray brick, standing alone in a field of grave mounds. To the south lies the stream of the Whangpoo, meeting at right angles the vast yellow flood of the YangTse. On the fork of land between the two rivers stand the Woosung forts. All the shipping to and from Shanghai sails up the Woosung. The new railroad from Shanghai to the Point runs between the house and the shore. Inland the ground stretches towards the horizon in billowing, grave-humped fields almost concealing the groups of bamboo houses and the scattered villages.

I soon began to feel at home with all the little waifs. They were as clean as a new day and obedient and well behaved. When they found I liked to play games when lessons were over, they took to me at once. I had no real duties. The Chinese teachers took care of all the regular lessons. I looked over their scalps and eyes and ears while I had opportunity and sat at the long table with them at meal times. And at night I made rounds through the bare, open-windowed rooms, seeing that each little tot was in her appointed cot of the double-decker tiers. Sometimes we played hide and seek around the grave mounds, and sometimes we stood at the wide curtainless windows and watched the sails on the river. I'd tell them stories about each boat that went by, about the gray warships, or the ancient

junks with their yellow eyes at the prow and their tattered sails of matting.

The days passed swiftly. Edward came down daily. Miss Fairchild improved steadily, and I was soon expecting to return to the hospital. Then came the sudden shifting of the seat of warfare from the Arsenal, at the southwest of the settlement, to the Woosung forts at the north. I remember that morning perfectly. It was August thirteen, and I stood at the head of the long breakfast table and said Grace with no thought in my head but of the day's usual routine. With demure orderliness the little girls, all under twelve, seated themselves on their stools and began their bowls of rice. The first few moments were always devoted in silence to the rite of eating, but as the bowls were replenished for the second time, the children began their eager talk. On either side of me sat my two best teachers. As the conversation broke out, one of them leaned towards me and spoke in low tones.

"Doctor Wilhelmina," she said, "the boy from my father's house came early this morning with a letter from my father, urging me to return at once to Shanghai. He writes that the city is full of rumors of an attack on the forts. He fears for my safety."

I was filled with consternation. "You must go, Dong Iung," I said. "It is only right that any one who can should go. I will dismiss all the teachers and servants this morning. I don't want any one to take any risks. As for myself, I don't believe there is any real danger. Miss Judson would have

told us if there were, or Mr. Stevens would have come out."

"Will you go? Will the children go?" asked Dong Iung.

"If there is real danger, of course we will go," I answered. "But we must not let ourselves be driven away by a foolish panic. It is hard to find a home at a moment's notice for one hundred and eighty little girls."

"There are the refuge camps," suggested Dong Iung. "Father says that bread and soup is being distributed free every morning in the marketplaces in Shanghai."

"That would never do," I cried aghast. "I'm really not worried, for Miss Judson will let me know in time if we have to leave."

"If you stay, then I will," answered Dong Iung. She started to her feet impetuously.

"I'd like to keep you," I said. "You are a great help to me, but since your father has sent for you, you must go."

Dong Iung shook her head. "I'm not a slave any more," she asserted. "I earn my own living. My duty is the same as yours. You cannot make me a coward. I will not run away."

She looked so very slim and boyish and determined as she drew herself up in her trousers and jacket that I almost yielded.

"Where is the boy?" I asked.

"He is waiting in the kitchen," Dong Iung replied.

"Send him to me in my office," I said.

Dong Iung went to give my message, and I walked across the hall into the tiny, white cubbyhole which was Miss Fairchild's office. On the wall hung a picture of Christ blessing little children. One big desk stood across the wall opposite the door. There were two chairs, one for Miss Fairchild and one for a visitor. Dong Iung came in, followed by a boy in the long, white, regulation upper garment of a Chinese house servant. Breaking into rapid Chinese, he began his story. I caught his meaning well enough, but I wanted to be sure.

"What does he say?" I asked Dong Iung.

"He says," she answered, "that orders have been issued to close the river to all incoming and outgoing craft, that all the government war boats are steaming towards the point, and that the bombardment will begin at 2 P.M. The rebels are expecting reinforcements by evening."

If true, that was bad news indeed, but we had been fed by so many unreliable rumors that I did not let myself worry too much. I knew that Miss Judson and Edward would let me know in time, if anything really dangerous threatened. Still I dismissed all the paid teachers and servants and sent them home till further notice. There was a good deal of excitement among the children, for though I forbade any one explaining the cause of the sudden holiday, still the news leaked out. The servants and teachers rushed about wildly, packing up their belongings and taking tearful farewells. In an incredibly short time the little cavalcade was ready to start for the station a quarter of a mile distant.

Dong Iung was the last to leave. She clung to my arm weeping. "Come too," she urged. "You don't know Chinese soldiers. First they fire the place, then they loot. Pretty women first."

The girl clung to me in real terror. Almost she shook my resolution. Suppose the news were really authentic this time. Miss Judson and Edward would not have time to reach us before the bombardment began, and the Refuge was in the direct firing line. If there hadn't been quite so many children, I believe I would have gone, but No! It was impossible. My trust in the others reasserted itself. I knew they would not forget us. Probably at this very moment they were perfecting a plan for our benefit. While I hesitated, the 'phone rang. It was Miss Judson herself.

Dong Iung paused in the doorway to hear her message. It was short but reassuring. "It's all right," I said, feeling that a weight had been lifted off my heart. "The fighting is not to begin till to-morrow afternoon, and in the morning Miss Judson is bringing out a special train to take all the children away to West Gate, which is now the safest place."

"Then I shall stay too," said Dong Iung.

"No, indeed," I said. "Your father has sent for you and go you must."

I gave her a little shove and shut the door behind her. I had a pang of loneliness after they all left, and I wondered why Edward had not come down to stay with us. It seemed, if there ever were a fitting time to have a man in the house, this was it. I

felt I belonged with the little outcasts, the poor little tots who had been beaten and tortured and starved little slaves. We were all forgotten and unwanted. It is a horrible feeling. Fortunately for me, the children would not let me alone. They clustered around me, wanting to know what it all meant. A few of the older ones stood quiet and solemn. They were all quite demoralized. Of course I could not let that go on. I divided them up into their usual classes and called each older girl by the name of a departed teacher. Only give a Chinese a part to play, and you have given her an absorbing interest. Real dramatic ability seems to lie around loose anywhere among them. The veriest beggar off the streets can act a part. The accustomed routine calmed the children, and by afternoon no traces of unusual excitement were to be seen. Only, when playtime came, I kept them indoors, and we went upstairs to the attic. I stood at the window and watched the Whangpoo River. It looked very clear and gray, winding between its willow-fringed banks. On the opposite shore the low houses of Pootung were half hidden in trees. Around the forts, in a menacing semicircle, clustered a score or more Chinese men-of-war. Ultra-modern, painted in hungry gray, or medieval survivors with high, curling poops and painted yellow eyes on the bows, the vessels loomed sinister through the gathering dusk. Beyond their lines in the river lay three or four foreign gunboats, and at the mouth of the YangTse was a foreign liner waiting to come up to Shanghai. So near they seemed, as if I could

put out my hand and touch them. They were soundless, motionless; they lay like phantoms on the water. The low bamboo houses along the bank, the willows bending in the wind, a wheelbarrow trundled along in blissful leisure — these were the real things, not those inconceivable shapes conjured up by some evil imagination. Yet over the forts, in flaunting arrogance, floated the flag of the rebels. I stood at the window a long time watching those motionless monsters.

Night fell. I put the children to bed in their long rows of double-decker cots. Then I made the rounds of the Refuge, bolting windows and barring doors. At last I had done everything I could think of. I went to my room and undressed for bed, but I couldn't sleep. It was no use lying staring at the ceiling, so I got up and put on a wrapper and went out on to the verandah outside my window. The stars were shining peacefully. One, more brilliant than the rest, cast a glittering drop of gold reflection in the water. The men-of-war were hardly visible; not a light shone on them. The night was very still, not a cricket chirped, not a leaf stirred.

I almost went to sleep in my long chair on the porch. Indeed, I must have dozed off, for I was awakened by a red flash of light and a deafening noise. The gunboats had opened fire on the forts. Siau-Noen, the baby of the institution, began to cry. I picked her up and held her in my arms. A few of the children stirred and cried out in their sleep, but most of them slept through the bombardment. For an hour or more the boats kept up an

active bombardment of the fort. A pallid searchlight played incessantly on its walls. In its light I could see the holes torn through the masonry. Once, when the wind veered, I fancied I heard the cries of men in pain. Then the firing ceased, and again the night was starred in silver peace. The tall grasses on the conical grave mounds waved gently, a cricket chirped, Siau-Noen slept soundly in my arms. I sat on the verandah till dawn. I watched the first, utterly forlorn, gray light that streaked the sky, watched till it quivered in a vibrating purple and suddenly burst into rose and yellow. The crows began to fly back to the fields behind Shanghai for their day's feeding. I always loved to watch them go, soaring past in twos and threes, with an occasional lazy straggler by himself. Often, when I had come in early from a night case, I had seen them winging their way countryward across the red dawn. At evening they came back to the shelter of the city to roost. When I saw the crows, I was reassured. Day had come, and we were safe. Soon Miss Judson and Edward would appear, and my vigil would be over. Lifting the baby in my arms, I went in and put her down in her crib. Then I flung myself across the bed and went to sleep at once.

Suddenly some one was shaking me and calling to me in terror. "Wake up, wake up. A bullet has come through the dining-room window."

Another child burst into the room, crying, "Three bullets have come into the eating room."

"One fell into my bowl of rice," sobbed Ah-Me, casting herself into my lap.

The room was rapidly filling with frightened, crying children.

"My finger is hurt," wailed one of the smaller youngsters, pushing her way through to me, cupping her bleeding finger in the palm of her other hand.

"May-Li has fainted on the floor in the hall," some one announced.

"They are shooting at us from behind the grave mounds," said A-Doo, the first arrival. "Lots of men."

I ran to one of the back windows. It was as the children had announced. Little villainous puffs of pale smoke floated out continually from behind the grave mounds which made a series of natural breastworks and effectually hid the assailants.

"Why?" I asked of myself. The children were crowding about me again, some of them hysterical and many crying. "Don't be scared," I said. "See, I'm not scared at all. We'll just pretend they aren't there at all, and sing our favorite hymn."

I began the old, old song, "There is a happy land far, far away." The words of it were the first Chinese words I had learned and now came as easily to my tongue as the English. The children joined me, at first falteringly but soon with more force and volume. Still singing, I marched off to the kitchen at the river side of the house. The rhythm of the tune and the shuffling of the children's feet drowned the ominous patter of the bullets on the roof. I made them sit down in a kindergarten circle in the kitchen and sing songs. The children grew quieter. They began some of their favorite games.

Crash! A shell burst through the roof and splintered the chairs and tables in the dining room. A jagged crack yawned in the wall between. The children screamed with terror.

For a moment, I was paralyzed. We were caught like rats in a trap, to be shot to death before help could arrive. We were all alone! Miles from Shanghai! Separated from our friends! The children huddled about me, and I felt their little hands, cold with fright, clinging to me. Then I remembered the telephone. I called the older girls to me and tried to instill into them some courage. Anyway I made them all stop screaming and started them again on "There is a happy land." I told them to see how many verses they could sing before I got back from the telephone. Then I dashed down the hall. The telephone was in the vestibule on the land side of the house. Everywhere were signs of the effectiveness of the rebels' fire in broken windows and charred splinters. I had to wait a little, while Central got Miss Judson. I listened to the patter of the bullets against the walls and roof of the building. The children's voices came to me faintly through the closed doors. Miss Judson's voice was the most welcome sound on earth.

"We are being fired on, Miss Judson," I said. "The rebels, hundreds of them, crouch behind the grave mounds. Yes, several children are hurt slightly. One shell burst in the dining room. No one is killed. There must be some mistake. Perhaps they think the house is a barracks. You'll be down soon? I don't see how you can stop it,

but I know you will. We are all right. Don't worry. Good-by."

Reluctantly, I hung up the receiver. I wanted to keep her talking to me; I felt more courageous while she was talking. She had promised to organize a relief party immediately and come down in a special train for the children. Miss Judson hadn't mentioned Edward, and I had half a mind to call him up, but I didn't. I knew it would worry him so. He might do something rash. I began calculating how soon they would be here. Calculate as I would, allowing for no delay, they couldn't reach Kaung Wan under two hours.

Two hours!

A bullet tore through the glass of the vestibule and grazed my cheek. It stung a little, and a few drops of blood fell on my hand. The hideous cry of a shell shrieked overhead. It fell into the yard beyond, casting up a cascade of dirt. How fantastic it was! An army of men storming a home for little children!

My mind seized upon the idea that there must be some mistake, that the rebels did not know. Surely if they knew, they would stop. In that moment of terror but one solution presented itself to me, quite simple, as most solutions are. It was merely to open the door and walk out and show myself a couple of times. When the rebels knew that a foreign woman lived in the house, surely they would stop firing. And then the children and I would be saved. I saw it with startling clearness. Just open the door and walk out! But suppose the

rebels didn't stop firing? Suppose they dashed forward and surrounded me. With ghastly vividness, I remembered the tales of the Boxer atrocities, of other women tortured in the slaying. A panic swept over me. I was deathly afraid, afraid for myself and for the children. I knew the rescue party would be too late; if we were to be saved we had to be saved now. I was in a blue funk. I thought of the Chinese men, of their horrible, bloody hands and their imperturbable, grinning eyes. They were inhuman; they had no respect for women. If they touched me I must die, and if I died the children would be left alone. The fate of these little rescued slave girls would be a thousand times worse than before their rescue. Chinese soldiers spear babies on the ends of their bayonets.

I believed the rebels thought troops of the Republic were hidden within, waiting the opportune moment to sally forth and repulse the attack. If they knew there were only children, girl children, at their mercy, would they stay their hands, or would they rush the building and begin their malignant pillage and loot?

A deadly weakness overcame me. I thought I was dying. The one remaining thing to do my body refused to do. I could not open that door and walk out in the face of the raining bullets. It would be foolhardy, reckless. And yet, therein lay the only chance of safety for the children, the one last slim chance for life. I was trembling in a very passion of terror.

Another shell burst overhead. In a fresh access

of fear, the children screamed aloud. The end grew inevitable.

A quiet, emotionless calm fell on me. I loosened the fastenings of my white duck skirt and slipped it off, standing in a white petticoat. I unbolted the heavily barred door and stepped out on the terrace, waving my white skirt above my head. I was like a person in a trance, without a quiver of fright. Once, twice, three times I paraded the length of the terrace, waving my white flag of truce. The bullets kicked up the ground about me and struck little bits of plaster and stone from the walls. I fancied I felt the heat of their flying.

A dreadful sickness began to creep over me. The fields reeled and grew black. The grave mounds became tall peaks, spitting fire. The bullets flew faster than ever. I groped for the door, found it, pulled it to behind me, and slid to the floor in a little heap against it. I think I must have fainted. I seemed to live a long time with the raining of bullets echoing through my brain.

A-doo awoke me. "They have stopped," she cried. "They have stopped for almost a half an hour. We were worried about you, so I came out to find you."

I just put my arms around her and cried. "Thank God, we are saved."

"How did God save us?" asked A-doo.

A flood of happiness rushed over me. God had used me to save them; He had given me a chance to help. I wasn't tired any more, I felt as gay and light-hearted as a lark.

"Let's get the noontime rice," I said.

We had a gay time getting lunch. The children seemed to catch my good spirits. As for me, I was only too thankful that I had been given strength to rise to my chance. In the midst of the meal the rescue party surprised us. Finding the door open, they had come right in. I looked up to see Miss Judson, followed by the American consul and Doctor Richards, the head of the Red Cross, standing in the doorway. Over their heads I saw Edward. There was a look in his eyes I had never seen before, a look of deadly anxiety.

"For the last two hours I have lived in a purgatory of expectation," said Miss Judson. "I expected to find the house in flames, half the children burned to death, and the other half slain, while you, my dear, I never expected to find at all. And here you are eating tiffin as quietly as if Shanghai were stormed daily."

"How did you manage to get here so soon," I asked.

"I 'phoned the consul at once. He got official permission to use the Red Cross flag of truce and bring away the children. There is a special train waiting at the station to take them all back to Shanghai. When we reached Kaung Wan, it was as peaceful as a graveyard."

"It might very well have been a graveyard," said the consul, "but for Doctor Wilhelmina's presence of mind and bravery."

But I looked past him to Edward for my approval. The light I saw shining in his eyes was my reward.

Each child made a bundle of its night clothes, and we marched them down to the train, two by two. On either side were drawn up the ranks of the soldiers, rebels and government troops facing each other, and as through the stemmed-back waters of the Red Sea, the little children of the Lord walked in safety. As the train pulled out of the station, the deadly popping of the bullets began again!

XI

THE WALLED CITY

EDWARD insisted that I accept an invitation that came for me from Soochow a few days later. Doctor Donnellon also wanted me to go, and it was my regular vacation time. Around Shanghai the government troops were victorious, and the panic was subsiding. One by one the refugee families returned to the Native City, and the hospital began to take on its usual appearance of order and quiet. In the afternoons after tea it became a fad to ride out to the Arsenal and pick up spent bullets for souvenirs. Miss Chase at Jessfield had two tall conical shells on the mantelpiece which she had picked up after a riot. Always when I visited her my eyes returned to those unexploded shells on the mantelpiece among the vases of blue and white plum blossoms. One of the men said they might explode some day. They were to me symbolic of life in China, so smooth and shiny and symmetrical, yet with a deadly power hidden within. Here and there through the settlement, broken windows and tiny round holes through the solid wood doorways testified to the excitement of the past weeks. But otherwise it seemed all over. Up the river however the rebels were drawing near Nankin.

I hated to admit it, but I found myself rather shaky after the episode at Kaung Wan, and I was glad enough to accept my Soochow invitation. So far I had not been out of Shanghai; I had been too busy. As the wide pathless fields of the country around Shanghai had caught my imagination, so my first sight of a walled city rising on the plain was to take my breath away.

Edward came to the station to see me off. "I wish you were coming with me," I said. "I suddenly feel that I am going to be homesick."

"For me?" asked Edward. "That is the first real sign of devotion on your part that I have seen."

"I know you pine for the clinging vine," I said to tease him a little.

"No, I don't," he said. "I only pine for you. Set a date and set it soon, and we'll go off and take a lovely honeymoon all over China, and you shall see all the world."

"It sounds like a famous temptation," I said.

"Well?" he questioned.

"I can't decide right here, all in a moment," I said.

"But I thought you had been deciding at your leisure all these last weeks. You said you were deciding. I want you."

The guard came along, clanging to the carriage doors. The vendors of food, of eggs boiled in tea, of soggy dough balls, of bottled TanSan water, moved away reluctantly from the carriage windows and lost their interest in this particular trainload of people.

"Good-by," said Edward, holding my hand through the open window. "Don't forget I will want an answer when you come back."

Off we went. It took only a few moments to leave Shanghai behind and to run out into those limitless plains that had so allured me all winter. It was unbelievable! Like some dinosaur, huge and crushing, the train streaked through those fields of the past. On each side they stretched, quiet, waving with groves of fresh green bamboo grasses and the lush green of the new rice. The planting season was over, but here and there a few farmers were thigh deep in mud, transplanting. Lazy buffaloes browsed between the cultivated patches, guarded each by an urchin. The little boys lolled side-saddle on the wide backs of the huge animals and switched at the flies with a leaf-tipped branch. No fences, no walls, no dividing partitions of any kind were in sight. Around the clan-like family dwellings grew groves of bamboo and camphor and an occasional sycamore. Through the leaves I caught glimpses of the pointed, thatched roofs of the houses. The walls were of plaited bamboo branches. Of course there was no paint anywhere, and the houses seemed as much an integral part of the fields as the trees. Between the fields meandered little rills of muddy water. Across the fields I suddenly saw the slow, stately sails of junks. The hulls of the boats were invisible; only the billowing brown sails moved along over the fields like cloud shadows. It was Soochow Creek off there, below its banks, winding down from the interior to the shore. "The In-

terior", "Up River", are magic words to the dweller in Shanghai. They represent the unknown and its magic. I took a little quick breath of delight. Here was I too going to "the Interior", voyaging back fathoms deep into the unconscious past of the race.

My friend, Doctor Grace, had been a college mate in Old Philadelphia. I had met her at the wharf when she came out, but I had not seen her since. She had said in her letter that she would meet me at the station if she could get through with clinic in time. If not, she would send the hospital boy. I had only a suit case for my short visit.

The two hours passed like two minutes. With startling suddenness I saw the walled city rise on the horizon quite distinct and clear. It must have been visible several minutes before I saw it, because when I first turned, there it was, battlemented and hoary and romantic, like any Maxfield Parrish picture but a thousand times more real. Around it swept the wide brown moat, a real moat full of water and busy with rowboats and junks. The walls were great, high, massive structures. I saw people walking on them. Turrets marked the octagonal corners. Ramparts of green sod ran up to the edge of the walls, and tangled masses of vines with delicate white blossoms cascaded from the top. I couldn't take my eyes from the sight.

At the station a crowd of coolies, sedan-chair carriers, and donkey men clustered around the exit, crying their fare to the city of Beautiful Soo, for the railroad station is outside the city and across the moat. I looked in vain for Doctor Grace. Not a

A SEDAN CHAIR AND BEARERS

familiar face was in sight. I picked up my suit case and followed the rest of the passengers out of the exit gate. A tall coolie waved a piece of paper at every foreigner who passed him. I saw them looking at the paper and shaking their heads and passing on. I was curious about the paper. I walked in line so that I too should have a chance to look at the strange writing on the paper. The man before me had passed on. The coolie thrust the paper in my face. I gasped in sheer surprise, for on that mysterious paper that had been presented to each passenger who had descended from the train was my name.

"For Doctor Wilhelmina," it said in Doctor Grace's familiar handwriting. What a primitive method, yet how simple and effective! At my smile of recognition, the coolie nodded as if relieved, grabbed my suit case, and led me out of the station towards the stand of sedan chairs. Like waiting palanquins, they were ranged along the path with their groups of bearers, sometimes two by the poorer chairs, more usually three, and occasionally four, if the chair was meant for a fat man. Some were ancient affairs with closely drawn curtains; some more modern, of wicker, with their gay curtains looped back. All around me was the bustle of people making bargains and stowing away their belongings. Just before me a portly Chinaman with several bundles done up in silk handkerchiefs got into a sedan chair. The little bearers stooped into position under the shafts. One gave a guttural grunt as signal to the man behind. With a sideways lurch they rose to their feet and swung off down the

path at a brisk walk. Fascinated, I was standing watching them.

"Take care," shouted the hospital coolie at my elbow. I jumped aside to let a string of donkeys pass. Astride each little fellow dangled a Chinaman, their long legs quite able to help along by giving the ground a kick.

Then I got into my first sedan chair. The hospital coolie tucked my suit case under my feet and then disappeared. I supposed he had given ample instructions to the bearers. With a simultaneous swoop, they crawled into the shafts which are closed with a crossbar before and behind. This bar rests on the back of their shoulders across the neck. They have rags that they roll into a bundle and stick under the crossbar, much as a violinist sticks a handkerchief under his chin. The shafts, that stick out before and behind the chair, are about four feet long. Swung aloft in the air like a veritable queen we started down the rough path. I had three bearers. They walked with a rhythmic jerky movement, and at every twenty paces or so one of the bearers gave a different grunt. The third man, who had been walking alongside mopping himself, eyes and chest and abdomen, would spring into place. There would be an infinitesimal halt while the exchange was made from shoulder to shoulder, and on we would go. Over it all streamed the yellow sunshine, and on my left rose the green ramparts and lichen gray walls of the ancient city.

At the edge of the moat I was put down, and we all boarded a ferry. On the opposite side I got in

again. With a whoop they caught me up and off we went, up and up, through the side gate in the walls, and into the city itself. Never will I forget that first ride through Soochow. Perhaps the fact that I was alone, with no one to talk to, and that I was a stranger, going I knew not where, lent me a sense of adventure. However it came about, I felt transported into the land of Aladdin and the forty thieves. All the sights that met my eyes were fantastic and bizarre, out of shape and proportion with modern life. Great jars of tea stood at the corners of the streets, out of which any one who thirsted dipped a cup of brown tea in a pale, sand-colored, wooden dipper. I watched the carry-coolies set down their burdens, wipe the sweat from out their eyes, and lift up a dripping dipperful of tea to their mouths. Each jar stood in a wooden stand under a bent roof, like the shelter one sometimes sees over old-fashioned gates. Each one was big enough to hide a man.

The curtains of my chair were looped back, for was I not a bold, foreign woman who looked at the passers-by! I saw hardly any women on the streets, — now and then a coolie woman carrying a kettle of boiling water which she had bought at the nearest cook-shop for a few cash, or an old hag sitting in a doorway. The streets were like the alleyways of Venice. At any moment I could put out my two hands and touch the houses on either side. The Soochow Creek entered the city and ran through the town in a network of canals. The beautiful arched bridges of China spanned the crossings at every

turn. Without warning, up we would go, over high flights of irregular steps. At the summit of the bridge I would look up and down the canal and see the houses built like a solid wall along its edge. Some of the streets were empty and deserted, and again we traversed the thoroughfares of the town. We went along the Street of the Weavers. In each low, open room I saw the looms on which were stretched wondrous fabrics of flowered brocade, palest pink and baby blue and bridal crimson. I wondered how they were kept so clean in such darkened houses. From the Street of the Weavers we turned into the Street of the Jade Cutters. Here the whirring sound of the wheels filled the air, and the cutters stood stooping over their ancient revolving grindstones. We came out on the market square before a huge temple. The air smelt faintly of incense and the sound of temple bells hung over the place.

On and on we went. A sense of unreality stole over me. We weren't going anywhere in particular, we were just going on and on, as I had always wanted to, seeing all the wonder of the whole world. I felt that this ancient, walled city contained everything in the world.

After an hour and a half of this wild, silent carrying into the unknown, I began to feel that I was being carried off in earnest. I wasn't really scared, but I felt pleasantly thrilled. Should I presently have to call out to a chance passer-by to rescue me? Did these silent, jogging men know where they were going, or had they become hypnotized by the regular

THE TEMPLE

motion? We were passing along an empty street. A wide stream of water ran at one side, and beyond it rose the walls of a house more pretentious than most. It was two stories high. Small grilled windows as big as a napkin overlooked the stream. A heavy wooden door studded with brass nails opened on to a steep flight of steps that led to the water's edge. The fringes of two black cypresses tipped the walls that ran down the side of the stream from the house. The water itself was sluggish, and a faint, iridescent green scum floated on its surface. Two or three helpless brown leaves were caught in this green mesh and lay listless and motionless. We were the only people in sight. A queer, dank smell pervaded the place. In the ooze between the house and the water, a large green toad with purple spots blinked its protruding eyes.

"What man live this side?" I asked in Chinese.

At the sound of my voice, the front bearer turned around in surprise. This threw the back bearer out of step, and they both stopped. They sat my chair down and began mopping their brows. The third bearer joined the one in front.

"Ah! Teacher knows to speak Middle Kingdom speech," the man exclaimed in surprise.

"A little, little," I said. "Who lives in that big house?"

"A very rich man, oh Teacher, born before. But very sad. He has no sons. He is now old in years, already sixty and very venerable. He has four wives, but they all bear daughters. Only one year ago he married a young and beautiful wife. There was

great rejoicing in the whole house. She will soon bear a child. All year he and all his wives have prayed daily at the temple that the child may be a son. The Small Wife was carried out herself daily, so devout was she, but now she goes out no longer. They are all awaiting the great day."

I looked at the silent, barred house with added interest. In what frame of mind was the young girl waiting within? A boy would mean the road to happiness. She would be the old man's favorite, the darling of his eyes. The Great First wife would no longer look down on her and lord it over her. But a girl meant despair. And as I looked at the house, a face appeared at one of the small, barred upper windows in the second story, at one of those windows no larger than a napkin. It was the face of a girl, and her eyes looked across at me, riding so brazenly, so jauntily through the streets of the strange city, in my outlandish clothes, with big feet. I wondered did she envy my freedom, or did she shrink from it? Did she think I was a "foreign devil" with bold, forward manners, or did she think I was the forerunner of a like liberty for the girls of China? I couldn't tell what she thought, but I felt her eyes calling to me. She held the bars that spanned the window in her fingers and pressed her face closer and closer against them. Her hands looked very slim and transparent, and her eyes held a look of appeal.

I smiled at her and waved my hand. She looked at me a moment, then she too smiled. Some one appeared over her shoulder and drew her away.

"Good to look upon," said the bearers with a sly smile. "The first wife is fierce come death."

They picked me up again and started off at the never-tiring dogtrot down the street.

"This house, call itself how?" I asked.

"The House of Li," they answered.

In about fifteen minutes we reached the compound. The mission had bought land on both sides of the street long years ago and had planted rows of trees. Frame cottages that reminded me of New England stood on both sides. More pretentious brick buildings, the girls' school and the boys' college, stood in their own campuses. Sweet peas looked at me over the low fence, and a mass of petunias covered the posts of the porch. A wonderful sense of peace and cleanliness and busy activity pervaded the place. I heard the clear voices of children at play and the thud of a falling ball.

In the round stone gateway, the entrance to the hospital, which was built in Chinese style, stood Doctor Grace to receive me.

XII

THE FISHING BIRDS

I NEVER got over my feeling of enchantment in Soochow. It has always remained for me a place of marvels, yet the people who lived there took it all as a matter of course. The contrast between the community of missionaries and the Chinese was sharper than in Shanghai. Each was more individual, more remote from the other. And to me the strangest thing about the situation was that the ultimate point of contact was not material but spiritual. Each separate race held fast to its own customs of eating and sleeping and dressing. The Chinese women saw our unbound feet, and, though some daring ones followed suit, the great mass of the women were satisfied with small feet, were still even proud of them. And we saw the freedom of the daintily trousered Chinese women, yet none of us adopted their custom, much as some of us wanted to. No, it was not on the plane of material things that the two races touched, it was on that utterly essential plane of things spiritual. The whole human race is forever groping with outstretched hands towards the light, and these groping, unseeing hands touch in the darkness. That common

need and common desire was welding the two communities, the ancient Chinese of the Walled City and the Modern American missionaries, into one community.

The mission had made itself a beautiful home at the extreme end of the town up against the inner moat. A lane paved with bricks, wider than the city streets, ran through the center of the compound. On one side was the university with a campus of its own for the boys, and on the other side was the girls' school and the woman's hospital and the nurses' training school. The trees in the lane had been planted long ago by those heroic, pioneer missionaries who came into the unknown when a voyage to China was like a voyage to another planet, and China seemed as far away from home as Mars. When I think of them, they seem a different race from us. They were heroes and martyrs, while nowadays it's only a joy to be a missionary.

That evening after supper Doctor Grace and I walked up and down the shady lane with our arms wrapped around each other's waists in the fashion of long ago. We talked of everything under the sun, of Philadelphia and all the girls we had known there. One had gone to Persia and had married a minister and had a daughter. Another had gone to Mexico, had married, and had had to leave the country during the revolutions. Still another was in India. I had recently met a nurse from the old hospital who had gone to Syria. Her surgery overlooked the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean. We talked them all over, marveling at the strange

destinies of people once so near together in daily work, now scattered to the end of the world.

The city was very still. The water gates are closed at sundown, and the cumbrous, iron-toothed portcullis lowered into the water. We walked to the end of the lane and stood at the top of a flight of stone steps that led to a landing along the inner moat. A few wakeful boatmen were poling themselves lazily past. At the landing two boats were anchored, and a couple of coolies were loading them with bulky bales of silk. Lanterns, striped in rings of red and white, hung on the boats. Behind us the lane was unlit and shadowy. Before us the sluggish water looked solid and stationary. Above us rose the wall, silhouetted like a battlemented shadow against the starry sky. We could hardly see it, but we saw a space in the sky where there should have been stars, and where instead there was a regular turreted blackness. We were shut in for the night! The water gates were doubly closed, and all the little postern gates in the walls were barred and guarded by sentries.

Like the little woman who lost her petticoat, I hugged myself and said, "This is none of I!"

From beyond the wall came the faint, distant sound of frogs. It was not really a sound; rather it made the air vibrate as a shell vibrates when pressed against the ear.

"It's time to go to bed," said Doctor Grace. "We all go to bed with the Chinese."

"I hate to go in," I said, "and lose any of this enchantment."

A WATERGATE, SUNGKIANG

Doctor Grace laughed. "It won't evaporate overnight," she said. "It has been here for thousands and thousands of years. If ever anything in the history of mankind can be called permanent, this can."

"But you can't tell!" I cried. "It has never before met western civilization. It's a solvent. All the old things crumble at its touch."

"You are inconsistent," said Doctor Grace. "If you regret the past, why be a missionary?"

"No, I am not," I answered. "I don't think China is perfect, nor do I think we are perfect. I have come to bring the love of Jesus Christ, not our habits. But don't let's argue. I'd rather just walk up and down under these old trees and feel myself a part of the antiquity."

"You foolish child! We'll go to bed."

So we did. I hadn't slept outside my own room since coming to China. Once shut in alone, within four walls, I felt suddenly homesick. I wanted to be back at St. Margaret's; I wanted to see Edward. At least, I wanted a letter from him to put under my pillow when I went to sleep. I crawled in under the canopy of the mosquito netting. Close outside my window grew some willows. It was so still that I heard their tiny leaves slithering against each other. And this desert-like quietness was in the midst of a city, of a walled city of teeming millions. If a baby cried, I felt the whole city would hear it. You feel that such profound quiet is the preparation for a stupendous event.

Before I knew it, it was morning. I made rounds

with Doctor Grace and helped with clinic. In the afternoon she had prepared a treat for me. One of the men in the mission had a rowboat which he loaned to us. That again caught my breath away. Here I was in a rowboat, floating along on the inner moat of Soochow! We went down the watersteps, Mr. Jackson held the boat for us, and we pushed off. Doctor Grace insisted upon rowing, for, she said, I was to sit in the stern and see the sights. We rowed down to the nearest watergate. It was as thick as a house and the old blocks of stone were green with moss. Overhead I saw the black teeth of the raised portcullis hanging suspended above me. The air under the wide, thick gate was damp and cool as in a cellar. Near the gate, the inner moat was crowded with boats. As each long house-boat approached the entrance, the oarsman, standing at the stern, gave a guttural call, and the prow, seeming to move of itself, swung sharply into sight. Once through it and on the outer moat, we were plunged into another sphere of life. House boats drifted slowly by, a man at the stern oar, and children sprawling all over the narrow space. Little tots, dressed in red rags, climbed around the edges of the boat precariously. The next moment I saw one fall overboard. Before I had time to scream out, its mother jerked it up again by a rope which was tied around its middle.

"Don't they mind it at all?" I asked.

"Oh, no," said Doctor Grace. "They must fall in a dozen times a day. Whenever I come out, I see mothers pulling up their dangling infants."

Away to the horizon stretched the fields, those limitless, pathless fields I had grown to love so well. To my utter delight we followed the streams right into them. I had never seen them from the winding waterways, and at once I knew this was the proper way to approach them. The little huts faced the water. Flights of crooked stone steps led down the banks to the edge of the water. Women stooped on the last step, washing the evening rice. We passed two lengths of the river which had been fenced off with anchored buoys and twisted lines of straw rope. The stretch of water inside had been sewn with grain. On and on we went.

"Are we going anywhere in particular?" I asked. "Or don't you know where you are going?"

"Of course I do," said Doctor Grace. "We are going to see the fishing birds."

"The what?" I asked.

"The fishing birds," said Doctor Grace. "Wait till you see them. They belong to the husband of one of our patients. The women and children of the family come to the hospital. Only a month ago the last baby was born there."

It was about five o'clock. The shadows were long and level. Wafts of the sweet fragrance of blossoming beans blew to us from the banks. I recognized the smell; I knew the look of the plants —low, grey-green, with the blossoms close against the stems as if a host of purple and gray butterflies had cuddled against the bushes for the night. Birds were flying across the sky, swift crows, jet black, against the sunset, and the plumper "Sau Sau Man

Hau" (the Cook Cook Rice Well bird) that cries as it flies.

We turned a bend in the stream and came upon the queerest sight I have ever seen in my life.

The point of land where the streams divide rose steeply from the water. A house of wicker and bamboo, larger than most of the farmers' houses, stood in a grove of fresh green bamboo trees. The evening wind, rustling through their papery leaves, made a clear, soft, calling sound. Buffaloes and chickens roamed along the shore. On the lowest step of the water stairs stood a group of women and children watching a boat in the river.

A long narrow boat swung mid-stream. At first glance it looked as if the boat were not floating on the water, but as if it were being held just over its surface by a flock of black, strong birds as large as eagles, which hovered on both sides of it and flapped their great black wings, screaming harshly. Two men stood in the boat, which was shaped like a long scooped-out canoe. The men were motionless and silent. The little group on the shore was also motionless and silent. Doctor Grace stopped rowing. We caught the branch of an overhanging tree and moored ourselves at the bank, and we too were motionless and silent.

Fascinated, I watched the birds. They screamed and fluttered their wings. Suddenly one swooped into the water, more plunged after it. I saw them struggling and flapping their sooty black wings over the brown water as does a white sea gull when it snatches a fish. The men sprang into sudden

activity. They pulled the birds up by stout strings tied around their legs. They caught the struggling birds under their arms and jerked the fishes from their mouths. I saw a gleam of silver as they tossed the fish into a wicker fishing basket. The commotion among the birds subsided. They settled down into quietness on the rows of horizontal perches, making a soft blackness on the water beneath by the shadow of their wings.

"How many?" called a voice from the shore.

"Three," answered one of the men. "Later, more," he said. "The sun not yet falls down the Hill of Heaven. Wait till the fish see not the shadow of the black birds."

Doctor Grace explained the custom of cormorant fishing to me. It is an ancient Soochow industry. The birds, tied by a stout rope, three or four deep on the perches which stick out in parallel rows from each side of the boat, are kept very hungry. They fish, and the men steal the fish from their beaks. Along the outer moat they can often be seen fishing by daylight.

"Suppose all the birds flew up in the air at once?" I said. "Wouldn't they carry the boat right out of the water?"

"There is an ancient legend about a fisherman who was cruel to his birds," said Doctor Grace. "He took all the fish from them, not even giving them their just and due reward at the end of an evening's fishing. The birds were fierce and lean and hungry, and caught fish well. At night, the oldest son of the fisherman crept out to the tied

birds and fed them stolen morsels of rice and left-over bits of fish. This kept the birds strong. The friends of the fisherman warned him that he must give his birds more to eat. Day by day the birds became fiercer and leaner. They flapped their black pinions angrily over their perches and screamed harshly whenever the fisherman pulled open their beaks and robbed them of their fish. Once the fisherman was ill, and a neighbor took the birds out fishing. That day the birds gorged themselves, and the neighbor came home with his hand scratched and bleeding.

"'Your birds are not cormorants but evil spirits,' he said to his friend. 'If I were you, I would set them loose and let them fly away in a great black cloud over the sky.'

"But the fisherman only laughed and continued to treat the birds as before. He grew rich from his daily catch. And at night his little son crept out, in the shivery darkness, to feed the birds. He loved the birds. Sometimes in the early dawn he played to them on his little, hollow bamboo flute. As his father grew richer, he seemed to think all the world was his, and he treated everybody just as he treated his fishing birds. Everybody in the house grew afraid of him. The children hid away when they saw him coming home at night, and the women retired into their own quarters. At night when the birds were tied in safety, he sat under the cypresses at the little table in the front yard, and counted his fish. His little son would crouch behind the shutters and watch the long, lithe bodies of the fish slip

through his father's hands like shining pieces of silver.

"One day the little boy was sick. He had smallpox and lay moaning on a mattress on the floor in his mother's room. When evening came he remembered the hungry birds, but he was afraid to tell his mother lest she feed them clumsily and his father catch her at it and beat her. He tried to get up, but he fell back fainting on his mattress. So that night the birds had no food.

"The next day when the fisherman tied them in orderly rows on the side perches of the boat, the birds were very still and lifeless. Like black, wooden images they sat motionless and without sound. The sun hung low over the fields, making the shadows ebony-black, and the light places like patches of gold. On the farther side of the boat, where its shadow lay over the water, the cormorants saw the swift shadows of the gliding fishes. They saw the instantaneous flash of silver as the fish darted out of the shadow into the sunlit water before disappearing from their sight. Usually this was the signal for diving, but the birds waited. Not one moved, or fluttered a pinion. The fisherman stood waiting, too, wondering what had come over the birds. He also saw the fish shadows in the water like immaterial phantoms.

"The sun slipped slowly down the vault of the sky. A Minne bird called from the rice fields, a star hung in the west. Still the birds waited; and the fisherman waited, too. It grew night. The fisherman could barely see the mass of birds on his right and

on his left. Finally a strip of the rising moon showed scarlet over the rice fields. It was the signal. With harsh cries the birds flapped their wings in unison. The boat swayed and rocked on the water. A wind swept along the water from the rice fields and the moon. The birds lifted the boat free of the water, and it hung like a cradle between their soaring black wings.

"The people in the house heard the screaming of the cormorants and the rush of their wings, and they ran to the front door. Above the rice fields they saw the boat carried away. Like a black feather, it floated across the moon, which rose up scarlet and still over the water. The man was never seen or heard of again.

"And so," said Doctor Grace, "every cormorant fisher is careful to feed his birds well after the catch."

I wanted to wait for the sunset, but it was not allowed.

"That's one of the penalties of living in a walled city," said Doctor Grace. "You can never see the sun set or rise out in the fields. You can only see it from the walls of the city. If you don't pass through the water gates before sunset, you have to stay out all night, for at sunset the portcullis is lowered."

We waved our farewell to the little group on the shore. I too took an oar and we rowed for dear life. For, much as I would like to have stayed out all night, it's not proper! There would be some advantages in having a husband!

When we got back to the hospital we found a boy there with a note for Doctor Grace.

"It's from the house of Li, the jade merchant," she said. "They are expecting a baby there to-night. Will you go along?"

XIII

THE BRIGAND'S KNIFE

"WE'LL want two donkeys," said Doctor Grace to the boy, and we flew to get ready, changing our clothes and swallowing cups of black coffee. A nurse handed Doctor Grace her out-practice bag, already packed with its sterilized instruments. The gatekeeper called two donkey boys, each with his own little donkey.

"How are you going to ride?" I asked Doctor Grace.

"I ride side-saddle," she said, "but you can ride as you please. The only real comfort is to ride astride, but so many of the older missionaries think it isn't ladylike that I yield to their wishes."

Not to be outdone in politeness, I jumped up on my donkey sidewise, with my feet dangling in a truly ladylike fashion over his side. A dilapidated bridle and cross-saddle composed the harness. Ah Fok poked the donkey on the flank, and we started off at a brisk trot. For some unaccountable reason I began to laugh. I felt too ridiculous bouncing around on the back of the little animal; it was so tiny that any man could have helped it along by kicking the ground. Ah Fok ran alongside, giving

the necessary little, sharp cries that kept the donkey going and occasionally prodding him with a pointed stick, as we cantered gayly down the twilight street. Overhead the crimson sunset lingered, but in the narrow street of the city it was almost dusk. Lanterns hung before the shops. The dwelling houses were already closed and shuttered for the night. Across the court of a deserted temple, around a corner, and up over a bridge we went.

The bridge, like all Chinese bridges, arched up at the center, making a half circle over the surface of the water. Up we went without slowing, and off I slid. It happened very simply. As the back of the donkey assumed the steep incline of forty-five degrees I slipped gently backward over his tail. Ah Fok rushed to my rescue. Placing both his hands in the small of my back, he pushed with all his might and main to stop my avalanche. But I was too heavy; I went on sliding over the donkey's tail till I sat on the ground. It was all so funny I couldn't speak for laughing.

"Try cross-saddle," advised Doctor Grace. "They saw you start off in the proper fashion. Your intentions were good, but the only thing to do is to ride the way you can stay on."

I agreed. Those were the days of hobble skirts. Fortunately my petticoat was an heirloom of the past and possessed frills and ruffles. My dress skirt vanished from sight; it became a mere string around my waist. But my petticoat spread out in a truly gratifying manner over my legs. This manner of riding was a great improvement. The

donkey was small enough for me to grasp comfortably between my knees, and I felt as secure as in a rocking chair.

"Missey can do?" asked Ah Fok, running at my side.

"Can do," I answered.

Sometimes we trotted, but more often we galloped. Over the up and down arches of the bridges we walked. The donkey boys had muscles of wire and heart and lungs of India rubber. Without the slightest effort they ran along beside the donkeys, shouting and giving little sharp jabs at their flanks.

From the comparative quiet of darkened streets we turned into one of the busy thoroughfares where the shops stood wide open. The houses were like partitions, with separating walls and a back stoop but without any front at all. Unless one has seen such a street, it is hard to conceive the variety and color that all the lighted interiors give. The eating shops were full of men sitting in groups around small square tables, shoveling in rice by the mouthful. They hold the bowls close up against their lips, open their mouths to the fullest extent, and poke in great mountains of fine white rice. Holding the bowls at their mouths, they turn around and stare at the passers-by. Men with baskets full of towels wrung out of boiling, perfumed water pass among the eaters, offering a towel to each guest. It is the custom to wipe off one's face and head and neck with these towels. The waiter passes the same towel to the next guest and so on until the towel is cold.

In the wine-shops men were filling their tiny tea-cups with hot wine from metal teapots. In a large eat-shop a band of musicians sat playing a weird minor song, which echoed up and down the street above the sounds of evening life. At a temple a funeral was going on, and I caught a swift glimpse of priests in robes of red and green with mitered caps. On the outskirts of the crowd hung a fringe of monks in dirty gray. The hired mourners, in a discordant chorus, wailed shrilly, and little boy acolytes, in tattered, embroidered cassocks of blue and red, beat drums. The whole party were evidently enjoying themselves very much.

Opium dens, looking like sections of Pullman sleepers, with rows of closely curtained bunks one above the other and a narrow passage running down the middle, were squeezed in between the shops.

The streets themselves were filled with a busy throng of men. Dignitaries were carried about in stately sedan chairs. Once or twice I passed a chair in which I caught a fleeting glimpse of a bejeweled woman, slowly fanning herself and peering out through the half drawn curtains with listless eyes. There were no women afoot in that crowd of animated, merry, eating humanity.

Ah Fok ran ahead, crying out, "Make way for the Illustrious Foreign-born Healer. Make way."

The clatter of the donkeys' hoofs, the shouting of the donkey boys, made a stir of interest in the mass of people. The men squeezed up against the walls to let us pass, and I heard murmurs of surprise. In the eyes of an oriental, we were

incomprehensible. Even our own grandmothers would have gasped! Women, alone, at that time of night, single and virtuous!

On the bridges I looked down on the dark canals, stretching like black ribbons through the city, separating the opposite houses, but linking the far parts together. Dark and mysterious they lay, in silent contrast to the night lights of the city. Over the bridge, through the bright streets, we went, till at last we left all the busy quarter of night life behind us. Ah Fok gave a vigorous jab at my donkey, and it burst into a run. Away went my stirrups; my skirts streamed out behind me. I clamped my legs around the animal's body, found I was perfectly secure, and gave myself up to enjoyment. Ah Fok was forgotten and out of sight. A long straight alley lay before me, where blank walls rose on either side. No one was in sight. Faint, dim starlight made a deeper darkness of this narrow straight alley. No lanterns hung at the doorposts, no light gleamed from under the threshold of the barred doors sunk in the walls, no sound came from the houses. The night wind blew in my face. My hairpins fell out, and my hair streamed back in the wind. Only a woman knows the sense of adventure and freedom that comes with loose, flying hair. China dropped away from my consciousness, and I was filled with the elemental delight of swift motion toward an unknown destination. But the little donkey knew where it was going. Right and left, we turned the corners galloping, with the thudding clatter of hoofs the only sound in the stillness. We

seemed to be running through a city of the dead. We met no one, saw no one, heard no one.

Into the blue-black night, to which my eyes had grown accustomed, shot a thin gleam of yellow light, close along the ground. Suddenly it widened to a triangle, then vanished utterly. A door in the silent walls had opened and closed, yet I heard no footfalls nor the chatter of voices. Perhaps some one, startled by the tumultuous sound of our approach, had but peered out from curiosity. My eyes focused themselves on the spot in the wall where the break of light had occurred. Suddenly we were abreast of it, then had left it behind. A thrill of excitement tingled through me. In that moment, as we flashed by, I saw a man leaning, slouching against the wall. He had not moved as we passed, nor had I turned my head to look at him. From some obscure reason I had pretended I had not seen him. He looked as if he did not want to be seen. The door against which he leaned was sunken in the wall about a foot. He stood in that depression, motionless and sinister. I just caught the dark blur of a man's figure and the pale patch of a face. For no reason under the sun I was excited. I looked back over my shoulder for Ah Fok, but no one was in sight, not even the hiding man. The alley stretched away behind me as dark and impenetrable and uninhabited as when I had dashed down it. Yet I felt I was not alone.

To my great relief I heard the sound of ricksha wheels, and I drew the donkey down to a walk. The shrill voices of two women talking came to me

down the alley; the next moment I saw the lantern at the handlebars of a ricksha. It threw dancing, elfin shadows on the ground and made the legs of the coolie look tremendously black and thick. He was coming along carelessly at a jogtrot. The donkey halted at one side of the road, and I gathered up my hair and began rebraiding it. Two women were in the ricksha, a coolie woman and her mistress, who was sitting on the lap of the amah. Some unusual event had called them out, and they were talking in eager shrill tones, the ricksha man entering into their conversation when he saw fit. They gave a little shriek when they saw me, and craned their necks to stare back at me.

The coming of that flickering lantern made me feel suddenly forlorn. The night loomed black and threatening around me. I had no idea where I was, I didn't know how to return. The donkey had lost his initiative; he didn't seem to know any more than I did. The voices died away down the alley. The bobbing gleams of light were quite gone, so was my thrill and exhilaration. I felt utterly deserted and alone. I also felt that Edward had been very remiss to let me go off alone to Soochow! He might have known something would happen to me! Then I couldn't stand it any longer.

I dug my heels into the donkey and turned him back down the alley in the direction from which we had come, for I wanted to catch up with that lighted lantern and those voices. The donkey sensed my meaning, and quite resignedly he trotted along back. Around the next corner I caught sight of the friendly

light shining on the legs of the ricksha man and on the spokes of the ricksha wheels and making a little arc of light on the pavement. It was a wonderful splash of light.

Suddenly something happened to it: it was dashed out of existence. A wild clamor broke out in front of me. The women screamed shrilly, their voices echoing back and forth across the alley from wall to wall, like balls bouncing to and fro. I heard the low guttural growl of a man. Then the ricksha man rushed past me, yelling. A woman screamed in a mounting shriek of terror, and I heard a stir of doors opening and closing on the other side of the walls, but no one came out into the alley.

I was deathly afraid, but I couldn't stay there and hear two women murdered, so I kicked the donkey, and we clattered towards the fray. But after all it wasn't I who saved the day, it was Ah Fok, the donkey boy. Running and shouting, he turned into the alley and bore down upon us.

The mistress had been thrown out on the ground by the sudden desertion of the ricksha man. A heavy figure stooped over her, and the amah was pounding and pulling at this figure. Ah Fok and I made a goodly din in the stillness. The robber was startled. He sprang to his feet, looked up and down the alley, and saw foes approaching in both directions. Quickly he leaned against the sunken door in the wall, and vanished from our sight.

Ridiculous and infantile, more like a hopping shadow than a rescuer, Ah Fok sprang towards the prostrate woman. I was already off my donkey

and kneeling beside her. The amah, in shrill excitement, pulled her to her feet.

"My rings and my bracelets," wailed the woman. "He has stolen my jewels."

With a swift movement the amah's hands went to the ears of her mistress.

"He had no time," said the woman. "I felt the blade of a knife cold against my cheek, but then the foreign woman cried out, and the man withheld his hand."

The amah was straightening her mistress' clothes and loudly bewailing their misfortune. Ah Fok, panting, leaned against the donkey, and I patted his hands. What funny things we do when we are upset! Neither of us spoke. I heard the sliding home of heavy bolts on the other side of the wall. At the end of the alley I saw a growing glimmer of light. It was the ricksha man, coming back with a friend. I sat on my donkey while they all had a "talkee talk." Ah Fok, satisfied as to my safety, joined in the parley, but no gate opened in the blank walls, and no head appeared to see what was up. That struck me as queer. I found I was shaking, or rather that the beating of my heart was shaking me. Also I was in a dripping perspiration. At last the Chinese turned and went off down the alley in the direction from which they had come. Ah Fok tied a leading string to the donkey's bridle. The noise of the rickshas died away. In the alley it was again utterly dark and silent. A strip of starry sky roofed the space between the houses. Taking a last look at the heavy wooden door sunk in the wall,

I noticed a faint glimmer of light near the threshold.

"What's that?" I asked Ah Fok.

He stooped and picked up a knife and held it out to me. It had a wide bright blade, and dusty red spots mottled its edge. I looked at it curiously. The handle was bluntly round and dark from much holding in hot, sweaty hands. I wanted to take it home as a souvenir. I wanted to show it to Edward. I wanted it very much, but so did Ah Fok. His whole body trembled with fearful entreaty. I suddenly became convinced that the robber was crouching on the other side of that barred door, listening with every nerve of his body. I almost fancied that Ah Fok turned and spoke so that his voice and words should carry to any one listening on the other side of the wall.

"Belong bad knife," he said. "Suppose Missey take homeside, some night knife can walk, can kill. Throw away."

Ah Fok held out his hands for the knife, but I still turned it over and over in my fingers, loath to relinquish it. Ah Fok, searching in his belt, drew out a box of matches. He lit two or three at once. The sudden flame made the scene weird and uncanny, throwing a great distorted shadow of us on the smooth surface of the opposite wall. The donkey was like some monstrous beast while Ah Fok and I bent like two gnomes over the blade in my hands. At one end of the handle, cut deeply into the wood and painted red, were two Chinese characters meaning "White Wolf."

"Bah Long" (White Wolf), shouted Ah Fok.

He caught the knife from my hands and threw it over the wall. We stood immobile till we heard it clang on the pavement of the garden within the wall. From over the wall came the sound of stealthy motions and a just audible sigh of content.

Ah Fok too was satisfied. He pulled at the rope on the bridle and we walked sedately back, down that long, narrow, sinister alley where all the houses were dark and barred and silent, where no glimmer of light shone through the chinks in the walls and doorways. The way back was long and tortuous. I had a suspicion that Ah Fok was purposely twisting this way and that so that I should utterly lose what sense of direction I had, so that I should never, by any chance, find that barred door in the blind wall.

We crossed a high bridge. The dark canal was dotted with the pinpoint, white reflections of the tranquil stars overhead. With soft gurgles, the water rushed and swished against the posts of the bridge. Something like the curved blade of a knife stuck in the ooze on the shore. I was never sure about that crescent bit of light. It might have been metal, but it might have been merely the iridescent gleam of a stagnant pool that took shape and meaning from our heated imaginations.

"A White Wolf knife," I whispered, pointing at the bit of silver light.

Ah Fok shivered.

"Bah Long," he whispered, his teeth chattering. The name of the famous brigand was yet more fearful than the fear of devils. Ah Fok jabbed

the donkey fiercely, and we plunged down the steep, irregular steps of the high bridge. The donkey slipped to his haunches and recovered his footing with a jerk, but Ah Fok, as if pursued by a hundred evil spirits, urged the donkey along, regardless of pitfalls. His sharp ringing cries echoed shrilly up and down the empty street. We did not slow down till we caught up with Doctor Grace.

We found her dismounted, waiting in front of a massive door, with a group of amahs and coolies around her. Lanterns hung on the gateposts. A lighted doorway threw floods of light down the path to the gate. From within the house came the sound of a woman moaning.

"Where have you been?" she asked. "I was about to turn back to hunt for you."

"The donkey ran away, and I got lost," I answered, "we had quite an adventure." I explained, telling her all the details. Doctor Grace took my news seriously.

"I'm afraid we'll have to discharge Ah Fok," she said. "He came to us without a recommendation. Once before his donkey has run away in that direction. That is a very dangerous part of the city. Even in peaceful times it is unsafe, but since the terrorism of the White Wolf brigands it is really dangerous. A nest of them are reported to be in hiding somewhere over there near one of the gates. Just last week one was shot by a sentry while he was trying to escape over the wall by night. Robberies are frequent, but the people are so afraid that they do nothing."

"It wasn't Ah Fok's fault," I said. "I think I rather enjoyed it."

Something within me, utterly primitive and untamed, exulted in the close danger, in my dip into the days of lawlessness and disorder and secrecy. My blood tingled through my veins. I wanted to go back to the hidden world of violence, to cast off my tame, demure shackles and be an Amazon. I was feeling very wild and reckless. I had not known before that each individual harbors all the past of the race within his own inner consciousness, battened down, clamped under by the etiquette of civilization. It had only needed the runaway, galloping hoofs of a little donkey and the gleam of a knife along the wall to hurl me back into the æons of the past.

But Doctor Grace guessed none of this. Outwardly as quiet and well behaved as she, I walked through the gate of the House of Li, the Jeweller in Jade.

XIV

THE WIVES OF LI

AS Doctor Grace led the way quickly into the house, I caught but a fleeting glimpse of the dark spaces of the garden. Great rocks and tall cypresses and the gentle sound of water filled the shadows. In the guest hall we were met by Li Sien Sang. He was a short man with a picture-book Chinese moustache, very fine and thin, with the ends drooping down on each side of his mouth like a pair of walrus tusks. The skin on his cheeks was pulled tightly across the malar bones underneath, giving him a look of emaciation. His manners were very courtly and his English good. He made us welcome and turned us over to the women of the house.

The guest hall was large and handsomely furnished. A beautiful scroll hung on the back wall of the room over the table of ceremonial worship. Two tall candlesticks, of a metal resembling pewter, on which thick red candles were spiked and flaring, stood on each corner of the table. A thin curl of incense from a brass griffin scented the room. Along the two walls, in rows of rigid orderliness, stood the guest tables and chairs, as if placed in readiness for ghostly visitors. The great divan of honor was of

finely woven rattan and carved redwood. My restless eyes were roving around the apartment while Doctor Grace and Mr. Li were talking. Here all was the height of formality. Each step of a guest was preordained, each formula of greeting ancestrally old and hallowed. Here it is, in the great guest hall, that the westerner is baffled. He comes with a direct purpose, a direct question in his mind, and is enwebbed by the delicate, shimmering fabric of oriental politeness. To us, it will ever be a mystery, one of the essential, lasting mysteries of existence, deeper than the evanescent customs of civilization, buried in the fiber of the race.

But our errand carried us past this jealously guarded room of ceremonies, into the primitive openness of life, where the Chinese are more astonishingly communicative than we.

The mother of Li, an autocratic old dame, still vigorous in spite of her advanced years, led us up the stairs into the apartment of the latest bride. Too much power throughout a long life had left her with an ungovernable temper. This was her reputation in Soochow, and her face showed as much. Servants and amahs clustered about us. Upstairs the rooms of the women's quarters were furnished with the same elegance as the guest hall. We were led through one room after another in which stood beds of carved redwood and heavy, round, redwood tables, with deeply carved dragons sprawling along the edge. The servants laughed and whispered and nudged each other, as is the way of servants in the Orient. In spite of the customs of a

higher caste, they show a strange democratic freedom of behavior and speech.

At last we came to the room of the fourth wife of Li. A young girl was propped up on a bed, lying back against the shoulders of her body servant.

"Already three days she has not slept," said the mother-in-law. "The noise of her groans disturbs me. I have not much hope that the child is a boy. I said as much to my son when he married her. She was pretty, but not of a suitable house. So to-day I said to my son, 'call the foreign-born healer and let this noise be stopped.'"

The old dowager walked over to the bed on her tiny stilt-like feet. Her silken trousers flapped against her. Her jacket was buttoned on her right shoulder with round jade studs, as large as a robin's egg and of that wonderful, clear, prized color of fresh spinach. Her hair ornaments were jade and pearl. The edge of her headband was incrusted with pearls. In spite of her advanced age, she was a graceful and imposing figure. I saw the other women watching her anxiously, as with her slow, wooden-kneed, mincing step she crossed the room and stood by the bed of the fourth wife. A not unkindly expression crossed her face.

"If it is a boy," she said, "I will make you my son's Great Wife. I will give you jade rings and pearl earrings and new clothes of satin and embroidery. But if it is a girl, Oh! then, thou unfortunate woman, go hide thy face from me forever. You will be fit only to be cast forth on the street."

The picture is cut into my brain — the square Chinese room with its curtained, carved bed, the center of all eyes; along the walls and in the doorway the faces of the curious, peeping women, some in silks and some in the common blue cloth of amahs; the figure of the mother-in-law, aloof and scornful at the corner of the bride's bed. From the recess of the bed looked the wide, drawn eyes of the girl. Her face was white with pain, yet the fear that lurked in her glance was more than the fear of physical suffering; it was the helpless, haunting fear of fate. This was the night of her ordeal. All her future life lay in the balance. Should it be happiness and honor and favor, or dishonor and drudgery? Already the answer lay decided within her. She had carried it around with her wherever she went, month after month, while her very soul was torn with suspense. Was it a girl, or was it a boy? Her agony of body was nothing to her agony of mind.

She was dressed in bridal crimson, and her hands were covered with rings. From the canopy of her bed hung countless balls and tassels, the supposed bringers of sons. Over her shoulder peered the curious eyes of her amah. For three days this woman too had shared the vigil of her mistress.

"Do you want me," I asked Doctor Grace.

"Not just now," she said. "Why don't you go and lie down, and I will call you when it is time for the anesthetic."

They led me away to the chamber adjoining and offered me a bed. I was tired, and I knew that a long wait, probably most of the night, lay before

me, so I lay down. All the bedclothes were silk. A cover of pink padded satin was spread on the mattress of woven coconut fiber. A little, wooden, neckpillow was placed under my head. A neatly rolled up pile of comforts lay along one side of the bed, ready for use — turquoise blue, imperial yellow, peach-blossom pink, all in the softest fabrics. On a round table near the bedside stood two water pipes of silver.

I lay down and pretended to sleep, but my mind was in too much of a whirl to compose itself. Amahs, carrying wooden pails of hot water, passed through the room, spilling puddles on the bare floor. The Chinese have evolved a strange, practical utility in their furniture. Scalding water neither hurts the varnish of the tables, nor the bare boards of their floors. In the next room I heard Doctor Grace's quiet voice. The groaning ceased, and soon Doctor Grace came in on tiptoe.

"She is sleeping," she said. "I have given her a sedative. She was quite worn out. This is a fiendish method, to keep the woman awake for days and days. Poor thing! She is only eighteen and scared to death of the old mother-in-law."

The doctor went back to her vigil, and I lay with my eyes open, staring at the ceiling. Another woman came in and stood beside me. She was about the age of Li and wore very handsome clothes. Her hair, though thin, was still black, and, in the uncanny fashion of the Chinese, her scalp had been blackened so that her baldness did not show. She took up the pipe that stood on the table, opened

the lid of the tobacco box, and picked up a tiny pinch with the little, silver pinchers that stood in a slim stand at the side. She poked this little pinch of tobacco into the pipe and drew two whiffs. Then she emptied out the smoked tobacco and repeated the process. She was leaning against the table, one satin, trousered leg crossed over the other, in a pose very graceful and natural. She smoked at least five minutes in silence, her eyes on the little instrument of pleasure. Her hands were laden with rings, and heavy bracelets of carved gold set with jade and sapphire clasped her wrists. The little pipe itself, with its carved dragons, and dangling silken tassels of peach pink, was utterly alluring. Graceful, daintily feminine, she intrigued my fancy. I wanted to know what she was thinking, what she had been thinking all her life, whether she liked it or not, what thrilled her, what bored her, what she thought about babies and men. I wanted to bridge the gulf between us and to have her talk to me frankly. I thought of the women I knew at home, women of fifty or thereabouts and, to my mind's eye, none of them presented the picture of mystery and charm this Chinese woman did smoking her silver pipe.

I had been watching her ever since she came into the room. She must have felt my staring, for she turned and smiled at me. This was my first sight of her full face, and I saw at once that she was an aristocratic Chinese beauty. She had the delicate oval face of classical beauty, and a smooth skin of almost occidental fairness, a skin that had never

been sunburned or wind-burned. She was, moreover, very carefully rouged and painted. Her eyebrows were drawn in a thin, fine, black arch over her sleepy eyes. The eyes themselves were faintly almond shaped and drowsy lidded. Her under lip was carmined, but not the upper. Hoops of pearl hung in her ears, lustrous against the soft bloom of her cheeks.

Here was a woman, past master in all that I was ignorant of, a creature that had made of herself a mysterious thing of subtle charm. How did she do it? Was she satisfied?

I sat up and spoke to her in English for I was sure that all the women in such a house would be educated. Nor was I mistaken. She spoke it beautifully, with only the hint of a delicious accent. I remembered that personal questions are the height of oriental politeness, so I began asking them.

"I'm not sleepy," I said, "I might as well get up, if you will stay and talk to me. Does it not wear you out staying up so many nights?"

"Oh, no," she said, "I like to stay up when there is a child coming. It is the proper place of the first wife. I have seen almost twenty babies born in this house since I came here thirty years ago."

"Tell me about them," I said. "Tell me about yourself."

Li Ta Ta smiled with pleasure. "If you like to listen, I will gladly tell you," she said. "It is an event to me to talk to a young foreign-born woman. Sometimes, from our latticed window on the moat, we see them coming to the home of the Doctrine-

Sowers near the wall. They ride by so gaily in their uncurtained sedan chairs. Long ago I used to envy them, but I don't any more. Now I think sometimes they don't understand the essentials of being a woman. I have been satisfied with my life; that is, I am now satisfied. Once I was unhappy, because I had no sons, but that has all passed.

"Tell me about it?" I urged.

"From the beginning?" asked Li Ta Ta.

"Yes, from the beginning," I said.

She was evidently pleased that I was interested. What she told me was like a fairy story, so improbable and unreal it seemed to my western mind.

"My father was head of the Jade Cutters' Guild," she said. "In his youth he made a trip to America. When he came home, he said to my mother that all his sons and daughters should be educated in the Western learning. At that time, the girls' school was just founded and had only a dozen pupils. When I was twelve years old, my father enrolled me as one of the first scholars. I was very happy there. I wanted to be a Christian, but my father would not allow it. Though in some respects he was very advanced, in matters of religion he was very conservative. We were devout Buddhists. Memories of Christmas festivals at school and Buddhist feasts lie side by side in my heart. In my childish mind I easily reconciled the beliefs of my loved ones, of my family, and of my teachers. The color of something gentle and sweet has always lain on the world for me, in spite of all the bitterness

I have eaten. At sixteen I was married. Even after all the long, benumbing length of years, I can still taste the salt tears on my lips as I sat shrouded in my bridal veil and was carried from the house of my parents to the home of my bridegroom's parents. Such utter, sweeping desolation engulfed me! I had a gorgeous bridal procession. My chair was lacquered in crimson and gilded with many dragons. My clothes were stiff with embroidery and pearls. Eight men took turns carrying me through the streets. But I sat within, crying. Thankful I was for my veil. I was lonely and frightened to death. Wealthy as was the house of Li, my mother-in-law had already established a reputation for tyranny and cruelty. She beat a slave to death. She cut off her amah's forefinger because she dropped a favorite vase. No wonder I sat in my bridal dress, crying bitter tears behind my veil of pearls, under my coronet of blue kingfisher feathers. I wished I could die.

"Within nine months my baby was born. It was a girl. My cup of bitterness ran over. Then, little by little, I loved the baby. It was so soft and round and rosy. I would take it away from the amah and run off to a corner in the garden, and play with it and sing to it and kiss it. I was in disgrace in the household because I had borne a girl, but, in those days, there was still hope. My husband was good to me. In my heart I was sick that the baby was not a boy, but by-and-by I grew happy again. In the winter, it was warm in the sunshine in the walled garden where I watched the lizards crawl out to

sun themselves. From the top window I looked up at the clouds and saw the line of the wall marching across the sky. On feast days we were carried forth in our sedan chairs to the temples or the graves. My husband was proud of my foreign accomplishments.

"With the passing of each year came a baby girl. The temper of my mother-in-law grew worse. Three of the little girls died. She rejoiced when they died, and I hated her. Then, one day, my husband told me he had arranged to take a second wife to bear him sons. He said I was accursed and would only bear girls.

"For days, I hid in the garden. My old amah, the one who had nursed all my babies, brought me food from the house. I heard the sounds of the wedding preparations. Finally pride made me go back, and I took my rightful place as the Great First Wife. I meant to hate the Small Wife, just as my mother-in-law hated me; it was my perquisite to hate her and make her life a misery to her. But I loved her from the first. She was young, and we were like sisters. Together we escaped from my mother-in-law's presence and sat in the garden. My amah bored a chink in the wall at the further end, and we took turns looking out at the world of passers-by.

"When May Li's first girl was born, I had already three living and three dead children. Not nursing my children myself, I had a child every year. May Li was too discouraged to get well. She lay in bed and grew white and pale. She didn't love her baby

girl as I had loved mine. One day she said to me, 'Ask thy husband if we may go to the temple to pray before the Goddess Kwannon. We will take the children and lunch and spend the day.'

"That night I beguiled my husband, and he promised to get us permission from his mother. The next day was clear and calm with a warm sun shining. It was springtime and, even in the city, the peach trees were blooming, and the little patches of yellow rape were like carpets of gold. Four chairs and bearers were prepared for us. I took my three daughters, Ling-Di (leading a brother), A-doo, (the greatest), and San Me (the third sister) with me. A-doo sat in the chair with my amah, Ling-Di sat on my lap, and San Me crouched at my feet. May Li got into her chair alone, the amah in another, with the baby Ai Ling in her arms. The cook had put up a nice lunch for us, which the amahs carried in two wicker baskets."

Li Ta Ta paused and blew a little whiff of smoke and looked at me questioningly. "Are you sure you care to hear all this?" she asked.

I eagerly assured her that I did.

"You see," she said, "the mind of a Chinese woman is filled with all manner of foolishness. It concerns itself, not with the big things of life, but with each little happening of our days with our children. It treasures them up, to think over by and by when the children are gone from us. I even remember the clothes my daughters wore that day of long ago. It is long since I lost them. They have all married and are gone to the houses of their mothers-in-law.

But on that bright day, so long ago, they were still mine. They were dressed in their best clothes, bright blue and pink and the baby in red. I couldn't help being happy. But May Li was sad. She had never resigned herself to her fate as had I. She had never carried her little baby in her arms; she seemed to hate her. So she sat alone in her sedan chair. The streets were full of interest to me and to my children. They pushed their heads out of the curtains and exclaimed at everything. Only A-doo had seen the canals before; to the other two water was something new and strange. Ling Di asked if one could walk on it. We were on our way to the Temple of Kwannon with her thousand hands of mercy. The temple is on one side of a deserted square. It used to be a busy marketplace, but the new market has taken away most of the trade. Our bearers put us down before the steps of the temple and sat down in the shade to rest, while the children ran about gaily. At one corner of the square stood an old pagoda with its paintings faded and its bells gone. A scribe sat at a low table under a willow in the shade, ready to write charms. A few candy shops stretched along in a row. We let the children wander at will with the amahs. Only A-doo held to my hand. May Li took her baby from the arms of the amah and held it close against her heart. I wondered if she had loved it all along and had only been pretending not to care for it on account of the mother-in-law. We went up to the temple steps — they were low stone steps worn from many feet. At the candle stand we bought many red

candles and packages of incense. Before the Image were rows and rows of candlesticks with empty spikes. We filled them all with candles, sticking each candle on its sharp spike. An old priest came out from the shadows behind the Goddess and lit the candles. We crouched on the floor and beat our heads against the ground. I do not know for what May Li prayed. I had ceased to pray for sons. I too believed the words of my mother-in-law, that I could only bear girls, and it no longer mattered to me. It was so many years ago that I had hoped to have sons! Now, I no longer hoped for them. My mind was a blank. I sat on my feet on the old stones and beat my head against the ground and prayed for gentle mothers-in-law for my daughters. Then I sat back on my feet and lifted up my face and looked at the Goddess. She was a great Goddess and filled all the space of the temple. Her head was lost under the gloom of the peaked roof; her many hands were painted golden. Through the twinkling yellow lights and the long red lines of the candles I looked up at her and wondered. We had lit all our incense, so that the air was hazy and fragrant with it. A-doo got up and ran away to play with the other children. I looked over my shoulder and saw them bargaining at the candy shops. I saw the ancient scribe waiting bent over his table. No one wanted a letter written. The old priest in dirty gray robes went mumbling around in the shadows behind the great Goddess. Many strange thoughts went through my mind as I sat on my feet before the Goddess. I looked at May Li. She was rocking

herself to and fro the way mourners rock. I heard her murmuring words to the sleeping baby, 'Precious Jewel.'

"At one side of the temple was a nunnery of Buddhists who served the Goddess of Mercy. Behind the temple there used to be a baby tower, but it was no longer used. Instead, mothers gave their babies to the nuns. At the gateway hung the Sign of the Crimson Fish. This hung low so that a woman could reach it and strike it with her hands. When so struck, the crimson fish gave out a hollow, ringing sound like the mournful tolling of a temple bell. Below the sign of the fish was a gray drawer in the gate. I had forgotten about the nunnery and the baby drawer till I saw it again. A fear leaped into my heart. I looked out of the corner of my eyes at May Li. She still sat rocking herself on her feet with the baby in her arms.

"I bowed myself three times quickly before the Goddess. I looked again at her thousand hands. They were hands stretched out to help, but what can an image do! Of course it was wicked to think this, but the thoughts came into my head of their own accord. The red candles were burning brighter, and their yellow flames danced like a thousand lights before my eyes. The incense hung in a blue haze around the head and eyes of the Goddess, hiding her face from our eyes. Was she angry at my impious thoughts?

"I touched May Li on the arm. 'Come to lunch,' I said. She got up at once and joined us. The servants had prepared our lunch at a table in

front of the candy shops. There were three or four tables filled with lunch parties who had come to worship at the feet of the Goddess of Mercy. We got hot water for our tea from the hot-water shop at the corner. The children and the amahs and I were happy. We watched everything with new eyes. Men riding by on donkeys, carry-coolies, amahs with bundles — everything was of intense interest to us. The sun was warm and pleasant; a drowsy peace pervaded the deserted market square.

"Suddenly the booming of the Crimson Fish startled me. I turned around and looked at it. May Li stood under it. With one arm she held Ai Ling pressed against her heart, with the other she struck the fish sharply again. The sound echoed out over the happy square. The children and amahs turned in a fright. Even the sleepy scribe lifted up his head to look in amazement. Again May Li struck the fish. Three times its hollow, mournful sound reverberated out over the square. She bent her head as if listening for footsteps on the other side of the gate, while we stood as motionless and silent as if we too were listening for the sound of approaching feet. She heard them. She bent forward quickly, jerked open the baby drawer, and laid Ai Ling in it. Then she shut the drawer, and again she bent her head to listen. She heard the slow retreat of feet from the gateway. With a shriek of despair she pulled open the drawer again. It was empty! May Li fell shrieking into my arms.

"The events of the day were not yet over. The bearers and the amahs clustered around May Li in great concern. One of the bearers suggested that we go a little way into the country, to make May Li forget the sharpness of her sorrow. To go outside the walls was to us like going to another continent. Even sunk in the depths of sorrow, such a prospect must have roused one. May Li grew calmer. 'I could not let her live where she was unwanted,' she said. 'The nuns will be good to her.'

"The men took us through a little gate in the wall and set our chairs down on the ground. With utter astonishment we looked off, far away, across the fields without houses, without stores, without temples. I had never seen such a far horizon in my life, nor so much grass. The rape fields blazed like captive sunshine and rippled in the wind like golden water. The boats on the moat moved mysteriously. We saw the wind belly out their tall brown sails, and we saw them slip over the water without effort of any kind. We saw the greatest wonder of our lives. A feather of black cloud appeared over the field and approached towards us, as if driven by a great wind. But we did not feel this wind; we felt only the gentle summer wind in our faces, the same wind that ballooned out the brown sails of the boats. But the wind that blew the black cloud down upon us was another wind. The black cloud rushed at us. It spread out over the plains and cast a dark shadow on the rape fields, so that they no longer were golden, but gray.

"'See, Mother,' cried A-doo, 'a black dragon crawls beneath the wind cloud.' A shrill whistle pierced our ears. Nothing that we had ever heard in our lives could make such a sound.

"'What is it, Mother?' asked the children. 'Is it the black wind cloud speaking, or the snake that crawls beneath?'

"When it slowed and stopped across the moat from us, the children screamed in terror. Tongues of fire spurted from its nostrils and fire gleamed under its head. We did not draw a free breath till the dragon and its wind cloud fled away across the fields again and left us in peace once more. We could not talk enough of the sight we had seen. Only one of the bearers had seen a fire wagon before. We were all equally astounded. Even May Li smiled. To you, who have ridden fearlessly on many fire-wagons, it will be hard to understand what an event the first sight of a train was to us. We had our first inkling of some power utterly foreign and incomprehensible and strange, rushing at us across the space of the world.

"No wonder that day is as clear to me as if it were yesterday. Such a day, even among days of interest, would stand out in memory, but when it was the only day for months and months when anything had happened other than three meals, you can conceive of the magnitude of its happenings.

"The loss of the baby did not disturb us much. We were too accustomed to such actions. Moreover the mother-in-law would approve. Even my husband himself would not regret too much. It

was expensive to bring up a houseful of girls. It was a pious act.

"The climax of the day was upon us. Entering the streets of the city, where even the sunlight seemed shadowy and unreal, a great noise met our ears. People were running hither and thither; men called out to one another. A sharp smell of burning struck our nostrils. We turned into the temple square. A mass of fire and flames writhed and twisted upward. The crowds surged around it. The temple was burning and the cloister beside it. Frightened nuns ran screaming from the doorway. One, a tower of flame, threw herself from a second-story window, and more jumped after her. The old priest we had seen mumbling prayers in the shadow of Kwannon, crouched by the scribe, scared half out of his wits. With an echoing crash the temple roof fell in. Showers of splinters rushed up heavenwards. Smoke and flames swirled and tossed about the great Goddess. Now, for the first time, I knew she was great. Without outcry, immovable and glowing, she sat among the eddying clouds of smoke. Her thousand hands glowed red and live. Her eyes shone. Her heavy hair seemed to move. Gone was the crimson and gold; naked and glowing, she sat unmoved. More terrible than in her days of prosperity, potent and powerful, she shone at us through the drifts of gray smoke.

"The crowd grew silent watching the transformed goddess. Only May Li began to cry aloud 'My baby.' She jumped out of her chair and struggled through the crowd. They let her pass till at last

she stood just in front of the Goddess. She stretched out her hands to the shining Goddess and cried, 'Give me back my baby.'

"Two nuns ran and drew her back. 'Go home,' they said, 'the Goddess has taken thy child.'"

Li Ta Ta shook herself as if she were tired from holding herself rigid in one position too long. I too was cramped. She sighed and refilled her little pipe.

"The fire didn't hurt the Goddess at all. The priests put on new red paint and regilded the bronze hands and her fame became great again. May Li however was never the same. A sorrowing spirit entered into her. She shut herself up in her room and refused to see any one. The mother-in-law was very fierce with her, but it was useless. May Li refused, and at last every one gave up trying. They say she is crazy. She sits in her room with the bars across the windows and gazes out at the sunshine. Often for days she neither eats nor speaks. We almost forget about her. It is as if she had died that day with her baby; only her body is left.

"After May Li, my husband took another wife. He went far away to the north, across the river, and took a country woman to wife. The mother-in-law so ordained it. In China we think it becomes necessary every so often for an illustrious family to take a wife from the people. Dong Iung was not much more than a slave wife. She was fat and strong; she could carry great wooden buckets full of water. And she nursed her children. Then it was, that I knew the curse was not upon May Li and myself; the curse was upon the House of Li.

Even this peasant woman bore only girls. Round, laughing, merry girls, a new one came every year. It was a bitter disgrace. The mother-in-law mocked at us, saying, we would be called The House of Girls. Li decided to adopt a boy, the younger son of his first cousin, to carry on the name. That would have ended our troubles, but one day he went to Shanghai and brought this girl back with him. 'Jewel', he called her. I was very angry, for I saw that my husband had taken her because he loved her. He had bought her in a wicked house because of her beautiful face and hands. Though she was only fourth wife, he made her his favorite. The mother-in-law was terribly angry. She wished me to torment the girl, but though I too was angry, I could not. She was but little younger than my San Me who had married and left me, and I could not beat her and mistreat her. Once when my husband was gone on a long business trip, the mother-in-law herself beat her till she fainted. Li came home unexpectedly that night and found the marks of the beating still on her body. The mother-in-law has feared him since. Pau Tsu (Jewel) is terrified. She is afraid to have a girl. But I do not think my husband cares so much any more. He is contented in his mind to adopt a son. He only cares for the girl herself. It is as if he loved for the first time. And now I do not mind that either. He leaves me alone and I am able to think and remember. I wish that Pau Tsu may bear him a son."

Li Ta Ta stopped speaking and went over to the door leading to the next room. All was silent

within, and I got up and went in to see Doctor Grace. Both she and the patient were sleeping. In an adjoining room I saw the dowager and some of the other women sleeping. While I looked at them they opened their eyes and questioned me mutely. I shook my head, and their eyelids fluttered to again. Li Ta Ta left me. The house was silent with an uncanny silence, the ominous, forced silence of people and places that wait for some momentous event, that save and husband their energies for swift action. I was troubled. The recital of Li Ta Ta's story had stirred me strangely. It was so alien, so primitive in its physical interests, yet, the more I pondered it, the better I realized that she had found quietness for her soul by a spiritual conquest. She had come to possess her soul in peace and comfort. Her fight was the fight of all humanity, the struggle to rise above surroundings, to grow out of things material into things spiritual. What sublimer height could an oriental woman reach than for the first wife to wish her rival a son!

I was awakened from a doze by Doctor Grace standing over me.

"It's time," she said, "if you will give the anesthetic."

With the sudden plunge into full consciousness which doctors acquire, I followed her into the next room. Amahs were coming and going. The mother-in-law and Li Ta Ta sat on a couch behind the curtains of the bed. Li himself caught Doctor Grace's sleeve as we passed through the doorway.

"Never mind about the child," he said. "I only care about the woman."

His hands trembled, and his voice was husky. Li Ta Ta was right. Her husband loved his bought slave bride. He had forgotten about the necessary son to worship at his tomb, had forgotten all but the woman he loved. Love had released his soul from superstition and the thraldom of custom. Love shatters all but its own bonds.

In the eyes of the girl herself lay no happiness, only an overpowering fear, fear of the mother-in-law.

A few minutes later Doctor Grace held a little crying baby in her arms. The mother-in-law walked over to Doctor Grace and inspected the baby. She gave it one swift glance, folded her arms, and sniffed.

"Female," she said. "Take the little dog out of my sight."

"Give her to me," said Li Ta Ta; "I am the mother of girls."

Li himself gave not a thought to the baby but possessed himself of one of Jewel's listless hands and stroked it softly.

"It is all right," he said, his face shining with relief. "Pau Tsu is well."

It was dawn. The room was filled with a pallid light that made the innumerable candle flames but bits of sickly color on the tables and stools. The women suddenly looked tired. An amah went around blowing out the candles. Day had come with the new life, but the bride lay weeping in her crimson curtained bed.

XV

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

THE case of the Li bride utterly demoralized me. When we got back to the compound I found a letter from Edward, which I put under my pillow, and then I cried myself to sleep. Doctor Grace had arranged to let me sleep late, but she got up in an hour or two to go to work. About eleven, I got up and dressed and took my letter out on to the back steps of the cottage to read again and again. It comforted me somewhat but not thoroughly, for I had had a revelation of the abyss of difference between the thoughts and lives of men and women. Li Ta Ta and I, women of the East and West, born of different races, separated by centuries of education, were yet nearer together in feeling and understanding than Edward and I. All the sweet things he said — how much did he mean of them? And did he interpret them as I did? Moreover, even if he meant them, could he keep his promises? I had an illuminating glimpse into the fundamental variation of men from women. I had a new grasp of the stuff out of which we women must weave our happiness. I did not want to achieve a happiness like the happiness of Li Ta Ta, a happiness of doing without love, a happiness of renun-

ciation. Before Edward came it was different. I was thrown into a turmoil of emotion.

I was upset the entire week. The haunting remembrance of the wives of Li would not leave me. Saturday afternoon Doctor Grace arranged an outing in a Chinese house boat. Quite a party of us were going. A basket of sandwiches and cake was put in the boat, with a teapot and teacups. We were going to land at the Coffin House and have tea in the Court of the Tortoises. We went through the city by one of the larger canals, and again I experienced that strange altering of values that comes with the transfer from the land view to the water view. Through the beautiful arches we floated. The water was still, and the arch of the bridge and its reflection below made a perfect circle. As if suspended in air, we pierced the heart of circle after circle. The banks along the canal were built up with stone ramparts, now a foot or two in height, now six or eight feet above us. Sometimes paths bordered the canal, and sometimes the houses abutted on the water, their small windows opening directly over the canal. I saw the tall devil gates, placed across the road from the main entrance to the houses, to prevent the entrance of evil spirits. Spirits in China have some hard and fixed, fantastic characteristics. They can only go in a straight line! So any pious man is safe from their visitation if he builds a false door that stands in front of the real entrance like a fire screen. By this ingenious contrivance that portion of the highway that runs between the devil gate and the house, becomes

appropriated as a legitimate part of the front yard. The men of the family sit in its protection and smoke their pipes; the children play about in its security.

The canal traffic was not very heavy. On the outskirts of the town we passed a fisher boat. The man lived on it with his wife and entire family. The house boat was a long, narrow boat of the regulation type, varnished, with a hood of woven bamboo over its center. All the family activities were carried on within this hood. When a river man takes a river woman to wife, the only change in the life of the woman is to step across from the boat of her father to the boat of her husband. Drifting up and down stream, now to the coasts of Shanghai, now winding miles deep into the interior, they fish and live and eat and die. Time enough they have to become river philosophers! On they float, in the night, slipping from the close, peopled walls of the city, out through the open meadows, up and up, to the hills.

Our fisherman was fishing. With his back to the water, he stood on the stern of the boat which projected far out. Lithe and squat, he gathered up the circular net in both hands. Standing at the extreme edge of the boat, the heels of his bare feet stuck out over the last plank, he pulled the center of the net into his left hand and caught its ruffled circumference, like an open mouth, in his right. A moment he swung poised for action. Then with a swift pirouette, he bent and whirled around, swinging the net around his shoulders like a lasso. Holding

the center fast in his left hand, he flung the wide-open mouth of the net far out upon the water. With a splash it spread out its enticing coils. The corks on its circumference bobbed hither and thither in a dancing ring. A hoop of ripples ran towards the shore. The man drew in the net very slowly. Taut, its mouth still in the water, its center held firmly in the fisherman's left hand, it hung like a gigantic cobweb, shining and sparkling in the air. Here and there the silver bellies of fish caught the light. The fisherman dropped the folds of the net at his feet, and his wife picked off the fish and tossed them into a wicker basket. Then the fisherman poised himself for another throw. Balancing delicately over the water, he gathered up the net in orderly, precise folds. Again he stooped with marvelous speed and grace, whirled, and flung out his net upon the water. Never have I seen any motion so beautiful. Not even Pavlova could rival that fisherman of the canal. Again and again we watched him, spellbound by the rhythmic grace and strength of his motions. His wife, more nonchalant than he, looked up from her task of picking out the fish with incurious eyes. Several children gazed at us with frank interest.

"Are all the fishermen as clever as this one?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," said Doctor Grace. "They don't seem to know that they are doing anything beautiful. Of course a skilful one knows that he throws unerringly, tirelessly, but I have never seen any one take pleasure in the grace of the motion. That is a

queer thing about China, at least about this part of China. The people don't seem to enjoy motion or watching motion and they are very appreciative of all other kinds of beauty."

I could hardly bear to let the boat go away. The swift bend, the sudden turn, and the lightning-like casting of the fisherman's net put a spell on me. At last Doctor Grace laughed and ordered the oarsman to go ahead.

"You can come any day to see the net-casters," she said; "we can't lose this whole lovely afternoon for one fisherman."

We got out of the boat at the foot of a flight of temple steps. A long avenue of trees led up to an ancient temple and pagoda. This avenue was literally lined with peach trees and willows — and beggars. It seemed as if all the most forlorn specimens of humanity had elected to live along that approach. Upon looking closer, I saw that, though some were really deformed and disfigured, their real claim to beggardom lay in their clothes; women with babies swung like amulets around their necks, hoary sages with beards to their belts. And a lusty horde of youngsters bounded out from the shade of the trees to meet us, crying for coppers. Doctor Grace scattered a handful of cash among them. The boatman shooed them away, and we were allowed to proceed in peace. Two devil-catcher poles, slim and crimson, and girdled near the summits with their up-curling, devil-catching baskets, guarded the entrance.

We went through the famous gateway of the pagoda. Names of students, some dead, some

famous, were scrawled in true tourist fashion over all the reachable space of the lower walls. The breath of antiquity hung about its fading frescoes and moss-covered stones. Up and up it soared into the air, higher than anything in the surrounding land. Its series of diminishing galleries had the airy grace of perfect proportion. The Tiger Temple had fallen into ruins. Nothing but an entrance and an altar remained.

A file of priests, heralded by drums and pipes, wound down the street and passed us, through the temple entrance. Boys, in the costume of acolytes, marched ahead, carrying drums and bundles of silver and gold paper money. A paper ricksha, a servant in paper effigy,' bowls of food and incense were carried in great pomp. Through the dark gateway the procession filed. The priests, in robes of lush green and pigeon-blood red, marched to the altar and offerings of money and furniture and clothes were piled in a heap on its ancient stones. The priests began a weird chant, which fell with the subtle charm of an incantation on the air. In its mournful intervals I caught echoes of the song of the priests around the warm grave. It was the chant for the dead, and it filled the ruined courts of the Tiger Temple with strange, forgotten echoes. The moving circle of priests came to a standstill around the altar piled high with its paper offerings. The high priest stepped out from the circle and set a light to the offerings. The sudden blaze whirled and eddied upward from the altar stones. The priests began again their slow circling around and

THE TEMPLE COURTYARD. A CEREMONIAL

around the burning offering, chanting the same weird incantation. Heedless, the little acolytes whispered among themselves; the bystanders talked and chatted. Perhaps, in that throng, we were the most impressed. The burning sacrifice, the chanting, circling priests, the flaunting colors of embroidery and satin under the streaming sunlight, in the ruined courts of the Temple, gave me a sudden feeling of the reality of religion. It was not their religion, or my religion, that I felt; it was universal religion, the striving upward of all mankind to the Truth beyond.

While the ashes still glowed on the hearthstone of the ancient altar, the priests wound away, through the gateway, down again to the streets of the city. The onlookers drifted apart, and the temple court was deserted but for us and the glowing ashes. I felt a curious reluctance to leave until the last spark had died; it did not seem fitting to go chattering on our way, while the sacrifice still glowed.

At last I turned away. In the shadow of the deep stone gateway stood Edward. The sudden sight of him set my heart beating strangely. I wanted to run to him and have him catch me up in his arms, but, of course, I did nothing of the kind. I pretended I was just ordinarily pleased to see him.

"How did you get here?" I asked.

"How should anybody get here?" he said. "I had some business in Woosih and stopped off for the afternoon. At the compound they told me that if I took a donkey to the Tiger Temple I should catch you here."

Edward's coming made the queerest difference to me. All the things that I had been bothering about all the week were suddenly insignificant. They seemed to me foolish thoughts. A whirl of merriment seized the company, as we climbed back again into our house boat. The oarsman at the stern, on the other side of the bamboo hood, was out of sight and forgotten. The boat seemed to move of itself, to have a life of its own. We spread an old steamer rug on the boards of the prow and sat on the floor, dangling our feet over the edge of the boat. Edward sat behind me, and our fingers met on the gunwale. How can the mere touch of fingers solve all the problems of the universe!

We were on the inner moat. On one side towered the great wall against the sky, cutting the serene blue with its jagged, warlike outline; on the other lay the city. Every time we pierced the heart of a bridge and its reflection, I drew a quick breath of delight.

"Do you like it so much?" asked Edward.

I nodded.

"Shall I bring you here on your honeymoon?" he whispered.

I shook my head.

"Why not, if you like it so much?" he asked.

"I want to go to a new place," I answered, "where I have never been before, where I have never had any other thoughts, where I have never seen things without you."

"Where?" he asked.

"How should I know?" I replied.

"Do you want it to be a surprise?" he asked.

"Of course," I answered.

"I know a place," he whispered in my ear, bending forward over my shoulder, "I know a place where we can go to-morrow. Will you come?"

"To-morrow?" I gasped. "No, no, I am not ready. I have so much to tell you. I must have more time to think things out."

Edward looked at me curiously.

"It's no use trying to think things out," he said. "Haven't you found that out by this time? Life isn't so clear that thought can pierce it. We must go ahead and feel our way through. Tell me what has been troubling you."

So I told him about Li Ta Ta and the last bride and the fears their fate had aroused in me. Edward listened attentively. I felt better when I had told him about them. All the week I had been unable to write their story, and the harboring of it had become a secret which oppressed me like a treachery, it had filled me with such disloyal, suspicious thoughts.

"What do you think about it?" I asked.

"I can't tell you here," Edward said. "I must have you alone to tell you."

He unclasped his fingers from mine and drew back. His eyes were very tender, not reproachful, but that little action of his made me feel very forlorn and abandoned. A new realization entered my consciousness — my utter need of his love. Work and independence, how passionately I had wanted them! And now I was ready to cast them away for the touch of a man's fingers. Whatever the

future might hold, I knew what I wanted now. I slipped my hand back along the boards and found Edward's fingers. Then I was quite satisfied.

"See that wall along the inner side of the canal?" said Doctor Grace. "That is the Coffin House."

A low strip of wet green grass ran down to the water's edge. Willows, very old, with their weeping fronds trailing in the water, stood like mournful sentinels along the narrow path that led from the water to the walled house. Just beyond were rice fields and two lazy buffaloes, each watched by a little boy. We moored our boat and got out. Before us rose a square, walled house, blind and windowless. A gatekeeper let us pass without challenge. A series of three open courts led to the pool of the House of the Dead, where the ancient tortoises played. Around the courts were rows and rows of cells filled with coffins, waiting to be buried. Sometimes the coffins wait in the House of the Dead a hundred years, till the soothsayer foretells an auspicious day for burying, or until the family can afford the money for a fortunate place of burial. There were big coffins, — black, with gorgeous sprawling dragons in gilt on the lid, — little baby coffins, the size of a doll's trunk, rich coffins of teak, and cheap ones of ash roughly put together. Row after row, tier above tier, the chambers were filled with the coffined bodies of the dead. The dead and the stars always give me a feeling of the preciousness and futility of living. I always want to live more than ever. As in the catacombs of Latin countries, these dead shivered to decay above the ground.

We came at last to the inner court and the Pool of the Tortoises. There were really two pools, linked by a low flat bridge. A lattice of fretwork ran around the four sides of the pool. Slippery, moss-green steps of stone rose up from underneath the brown water. Ancient weeping willows grew in the open earth between the irregular flagging. Half the pool was in shadow and half in sunlight. The still water was a golden brown, the slanting beams of the sun penetrating but a short distance beneath its surface. I stood at the top of the steps, overcome by the silence, by the walls honeycombed with the dead past, and by the ancient mystery of the pools.

I had no feeling of being in a Campo Santo with its subtle benediction, but rather of being in a home of disembodied spirits who had not yet found rest and peace for their souls. Snatches of the gatekeeper's words drifted in to me as he showed the others some famous coffin.

"He was the richest man in Soochow. He had ten wives. His youngest wife died upon his body. People said she was forced to kill herself. She took opium. They were buried in the same coffin. Yes, this very coffin that you are looking at. The family have never been able to bury it. Whenever a fortune teller is called in to cast the charm and decide where and when to bury it, he cannot find a fortunate day. So it has been for a hundred years. See how well the wood has kept. The colors are still as bright as when they were first painted. The priests say that he does not want to

be buried, that his spirit interferes with the casting of the burying spell. He likes it here in the house of the dead. He likes the warm sunshine when it slants in during the early morning and touches the foot of his coffin. He likes the cool and shade in the hot summer days. He likes to feel the feet of the living walking past him and to hear their cheerful voices. And he likes the little body of his slave-wife lying against him in the close warm darkness. In the ground he would long ago have moldered and withered. Only last year the family took the lid off and saw the two lying clasped in each other's arms. They were very gorgeous, he in his official mandarin robes, she dressed as a bride. She was very young. She had not yet borne a child, and the Mandarin loved her. The other wives were jealous. I think she was glad to die. It was an act of devotion. Once at twilight I sat alone at the gate smoking my long pipe and thinking of nothing at all. All the women and children had gone home. Soon I too would go home to my little house at the end of the field, to a good hot supper of rice and fish. But there was still a little time to watch. The sun had not yet set. I knew it by the pink light on the clouds, though within the city walls all was long ago in shade. The water in the moat was running faster than its wont. The branches of the willows made a little rippling sound as they dipped in the water. On the other side of the wall I heard the cries of birds. Overhead flew a flock of crows, one by one, in a black stream across the pink sky, crying loudly.

"Light shone dimly in the open rooms of the houses

along the road. The pink in the sky faded. The heavens became a clear, quivering green. Overhead one star shone. It was time to close the House of the Dead for the night. I emptied my pipe and went in to close the gate. The courts were already dark. I walked through the three outer courts, to the Pool of the Tortoises. In the twilight I could not distinguish their backs. I threw them their evening offering of sweet cakes. I could not see, but I heard the waters move. I knew just how the sacred tortoises were gobbling up the little morsels of food. The water, stirred by their rushing bodies, swished against the stone steps. I stood there waiting a moment or so.

"Out of the deepest shadows under the ancient willows came a low soft laugh. It sounded like the laugh of a happy young girl or of a child that has never known sorrow. I wanted to laugh too, without knowing why. I tossed a second handful of cake crumbs into the unseen water. Again I heard the commotion of the eating tortoises. But the gay child's laugh came not again. Instead I saw two shadows underneath the willow. My eyes had grown accustomed to the twilight. I saw them quite distinctly. One was an old man, stooping, in the long-sleeved gown of a mandarin. The other was a young girl in the finery of a pleasure girl. They were holding hands and leaning over the lattice to look at the water. The turmoil in the water subsided. The tortoises sank into motionlessness. The two figures glided around the cloisters, the girl leading the old man by the hand. I was afraid to

move. I stood quite still, and they passed me without seeing me. A cool breath of air struck against me and I shivered. I watched them. They came out into the second court and stood beside this coffin. I looked again but they were gone. Other people had seen them too. Oftenest it is a slave-girl bride who sees the Mandarin's bride. They say she smiles and beckons. Then the bride dies. It is very bad luck to see the girl alone."

The voice of the gatekeeper ceased. For half a moment it was silent in the second court, and in the court of the Pool of the Tortoises. Then in the outer court talking broke out again. Still no one came in. My eyes, half staring and unseeing, were fixed on the sunlit space of the water. Suddenly it moved and heaved, and a great golden back came into sight. Another and another rose into view. Eight or ten huge tortoises, their backs mottled in gleams of yellow and brown, ruffled the pool with a thousand ripples. Centuries old, pampered and protected, fed cake and sweetmeats by the hands of countless generations, they lived on from age to age. I looked at their beautifully marked and tinted backs with awe. What had they not seen! Even the ghosts of the Mandarin who cannot be buried and his slave were not as old as the turtles. The mystery of the pool was a thousandfold intensified by the appearance of these animals who seemed to have lived forever.

A babel of tongues broke out in the outer court. A bevy of Chinese women and children entered the Court of the Pool. There were several high-born

women, innumerable amahs and coolies carrying babies and baskets of food.

They looked at me with interest and in a moment I had recognized them as belonging to the family of Li. Li Ta Ta was there, and the peasant wife from the north, and the Favorite. An amah followed her closely, carrying her baby girl in her arms. The women were accompanied by a countless number of children.

"Let us eat together," Li Ta Ta said. "Will the foreign-born teacher honor us by eating of our humble food?"

Doctor Grace and the others joined us. We combined our food and exchanged egg sandwiches for dough balls. The children were provided with little paper bags full of soft cakes to throw to the tortoises. They led me to the other side of the bridge where not only willows grew but vines of wisteria as thick as my waist. "The color of the sky," said Li Ta Ta, "and sweet as a field of beans."

The children laughed and fed the turtles just as little American children feed the bears with peanuts. It was like going to the circus to them. I was fascinated by the face of the bride. Li Ta Ta stood by the lattice with the children. Edward and Doctor Grace left again to explore a ruined pagoda behind the house, and I moved over beside the girl. She was very pale, with blue stains under her eyes. Her lips were the beautiful lips of a Chinese child, the upper lip very full in the center and deeply curved. She was carefully painted, spots of rouge on each cheek and in the middle of her chin. She

had taken her baby from the amah and held it in her arms.

"The little dog," she said, looking at it tenderly. "If she had only been a little boy, the mother-in-law would have called her the Little Prince."

"Never mind the mother-in-law," I said. "She is your Little Princess."

"It cannot be," said the bride. "She will be a little slave. I know about slaves," she continued. "Li Sien San bought me in a slave house in Shanghai. My father was a scholar. One day he went into Shanghai to meet a friend. This friend had become an opium eater, though father knew it not. Father was gone a month, and when he came back he brought opium with him. At first he smoked secretly, but soon he did not care what we thought any more. He smoked openly. Mother implored him on her knees to give it up, and so did his old mother. But he wouldn't. Already, in a few months, he loved the opium better than mother and wife and children. His mother died with a broken heart. My father sold everything we possessed. By day and by night he lay on the couch and smoked. He grew thin; the bones seemed to stretch his skin, so dry and shrunken had it become. He apprenticed my brother to a weaver. This broke my mother's heart, for my brother was to have been a scholar like my father. Soon that money was all gone too. Then father ordered mother to make for me beautiful clothes and prepare for a journey. 'I will take her to Shanghai,' he said. 'Her beauty is worth much gold.' Mother

and I knew what that meant, but we dared not disobey. Day after day we stitched on the fatal, beautiful clothes, such clothes as I should have had were I to be married in honor. Father set the day for departure. That night mother slipped her hand under father's pillow, where he kept the precious store of opium, and stole a handful. She got up and boiled hot water on the charcoal stove and made herself a cup of opium tea. Then she lay down beside father again and slept. In the morning, when father found she was dead, he was very angry. 'Now she will haunt me forever,' he said. Sometimes she haunts me too," said Pau Tsu. "In the slave house in Shanghai I used to see her sitting sorrowfully by the side of my bed. I learned many things there, too many to understand."

"Are you happy now?" I asked.

"How should I be happy?" she asked. "My child is a girl."

"But your husband loves you," I said.

Pau Tsu smiled faintly. "What is the love of a man?" she said. "Other men have also loved me, and it did not make me happy. No, it is not enough. He must love me for something more than sons. I am very tired."

I tried to cheer her up. I talked of all sorts of things, of the mission school and what she could do for her baby girl. To all my suggestions she offered the same reply. "It is impossible. The mother-in-law would not permit it."

She was so armored in misery that I could not reach her. Yet she was not rebellious or complain-

ing. Life was so, and she found it bitter. Then suddenly she touched my arm.

"See," she said, pointing across the pool at the shadow of the ancient willow. "See, the Mandarin's slave girl. She stands close against the trunk of the tree, half hidden by it, and beckons to me with her hand."

I looked across the pool. Already the opposite side of the court was dark with purple and blue shadows. The willows were misty gray like olive trees. The water was a fathomless slate color. The tortoises had sunk out of sight, or else floated motionless, with their backs just above the surface of the water, hardly distinguishable from the water itself. I looked up at the sky. A pink gauze veil was drawn across it. Directly overhead hung one silver star. Pau Tsu and I were alone beside the pool. Cool and mysterious with its dead people and its living tortoises, the court grew darker and darker.

"Listen," said Pau Tsu, now grasping my arm tightly. "I hear her laughing."

But under the willow I saw only the gathering mists of the evening and in the hollow court I heard only the soft stir of the evening wind and the lapping of the dead brown water against the moss-green stones.

XVI

THE SANCTUARY OF THE WELL

"YOU will have plenty of time to walk to the incubator on the way to the feast at Li's," said Doctor Grace. "I will meet you there at seven."

Edward and I started off on foot. He had been prevailed upon to spend the night. Before we had left the House of the Dead yesterday, Li Ta Ta had invited us to a feast this evening. All the morning we had sat on the water steps under the old camphor trees and watched the boats drift by on the inner moat. Edward had almost talked me out of my obsession of fear — almost, but not quite. But I managed for the moment to banish my worries and just be happy in the shared sunshine. Now we started off gaily on my first walk through the intricate streets of Soochow. Doctor Grace had given me elaborate directions, and with Edward I feared no adventure.

The streets were vivid with the coming and going of Oriental life. At the nearest corner stood a chow man. He had put down his wood and wicker stand, which he carried on his shoulder, and was fanning his charcoal fire into a flame. We stopped to watch him. Half a dozen ragged urchins had already

gathered about him. Tea and dough balls and cakes were his stock in trade. A boy swaggered forward with a brass cash in his open palm. They bargained vociferously as to how much that brass cash would buy. When that was settled at last to the satisfaction of all the bystanders, the boy and the food vendor cast their fingers for the cash or the food, while with bated breath the crowd watched the proceeding. The boy won. He pocketed his cash, and the vendor handed over the stipulated amount of sweetmeats. A delighted shout went up from the boys, and another, emboldened by the luck of the first, unearthed a cash, and the process was repeated. Again the boy won. The vendor was not in the least disturbed, but repeated the gambling again and again. The crowd around him grew denser. Luck was with the boys. The interest of the ragamuffins was intense. I watched them give the signal and fling out their fingers. They were more interested in the gambling than in the food, and the vendor more in the game than in his business.

"I'd like to try my luck," said Edward.

"Oh! you mustn't," I said. "It would be a bad example."

Edward pinched my arm. "Don't be afraid; I'm not going to. I was just stating my unregenerate feelings. One can't help admiring such a simple and ingenious way of adding zest to existence."

Along the banks of the many canals women were washing the evening rice. They crouched on the last step of the water stairs and dipped a woven bowl, full of rice kernels, into the muddy stream.

On other steps were women washing dirty clothes. From a house yet further down the stream I saw an amah empty a bucket of foul water into the same canal.

"Isn't it sickening," I said. "I don't understand how they can do it. How can they have any appetite for their food?"

"Don't try to understand," said Edward, "at least not this afternoon. Just enjoy the picture they make — the long brown canal, the flights of stone steps, the bending women at the water's edge. If you were Murillo, that is what you would see."

"But can one choose what one will see?" I asked.

"Of course one can," said Edward. "It's foolish to see what you can't help. It spoils enjoyment."

"You are a pagan," I said.

"Ah, no!" answered Edward. "That is a superficial remark. I object to being called pagan merely because I enjoy the world. 'Weltschmerz' was an epoch of feeling. We've left it behind us and come out into the Joylands again."

I looked at Edward wonderingly. He had never before spoken in that manner to me. Our courtship had been a matter of physical delight and shared experiences rather than shared thoughts. I grew a little shy of him. This Edward I didn't know at all.

We went through the Street of the Satin Weavers, where Edward could hardly drag me along, into the Street of the Jade Cutters, where the hum of the grindstones filled the air like the sound of countless

bees, and out to a market place near one of the gates in the wall. Here a building, larger than the others, caught our eyes at once. It was higher and of weather-beaten brick. At the door a workman welcomed us. He seemed to know our errand by intuition, or perhaps by experience, for the Incubator at Soochow is one of the sights of the city. Within we found ourselves in a large room, filled with small ovens made of clay and straw. In each oven was a shelf on which lay the eggs. A coolie walked leisurely around, blowing at a bed of dying charcoal, or banking down one that flamed too brightly. The next room was the most interesting. Above our heads, in long shallow bunks, under the ceiling, were laid hatching eggs. I had to climb up on a stool to see the shelves. They were covered, some with padded cotton comforts, just as if the eggs were persons, and some with layers of warm thick straw. The uppermost bunk was the hottest. Bigger ovens heated this room. Standing on the stool brought my head just on a level with the surface of the lowest shelf. This one was covered with yellow straw. "Peep, Peep", I heard the sound everywhere. Through the straw I saw myriads of gaping yellow beaks sticking up for air and food. Every moment another head appeared. By listening closely I fancied I heard the soft breaking of countless eggshells. A chick was born every second! And this had been going on from time immemorial! On one shelf a brood of fluffy, feathery chicks were feeding. Soft and yellow and warm, they ran about gaily. I wanted one.

"How much?" I asked.

"The big one, one cent," the egg-hatcher answered. "The little new ones only a half a cent."

"What would you do with it?" asked Edward.

"I'd take it to the Li children to play with," I said.

"Then you shan't have one," said Edward. "The children would only tease it and neglect it. It is much better off here."

I knew it was, so I didn't insist. Children can be so cruel without meaning to. I walked around the two rooms again, looking at the smooth, round white eggs in their little shallow pans over the charcoal stove, warming themselves to life, and at the myriads of hatching chicks peeping in the straw. Thousands, tens of thousands of little, fluffy, downy chicks coming to life every day! The old egg-hatcher was amused at my pleasure.

"Plenty good business," he said, "but no good for sleeping."

On the way to the house of Li we ran across the workshop of a potter and his son. They sat in the open front room of the house. A daughter or the son's wife sat on a narrow settle in the sun before the house, embroidering a pair of blue satin slippers. On a dark, stained table behind her were three covered cups of tea and a brass hot-water kettle. Along one side of the room were rows of shallow shelves on which stood vases of blue and white plum-blossom pattern. The boy was not working, only the old man sat at his wheel and molded the wet clay.

"Let's watch just one half minute," I said to Edward. "It fascinates me to see the shape emerge."

The old man looked up from his wheel. He had a benevolent, kindly smile; his eyes looked preoccupied. From the wet mound of clay at his side he pulled off a lump and stuck it on his revolving wheel. He looked up again at us, but his fingers went on shaping the wet mass of clay. Not once did he glance at the evolving vase, but as if by magic, under his caressing fingers, the formless lump took form and shape. It sprang up, it hollowed itself within, it curved in at the neck and flared out at the mouth, all in the twinkling of an eye, while the ancient past-master of his art looked at us with his benevolent, kindly eyes. The girl and the boy stopped in their work to watch the exhibition.

"Perfect," I cried.

"Marvelous," said Edward, with genuine admiration.

The boy spoke to the girl rapidly. She put down her embroidery and came up and stood beside us.

"My husband tells me to say to you that our father is blind. Long ago when he was a young man he worked in the great pottery factories up the river at Ching tuh Chen. He was one of the most expert. After many years, little white stones grew in his eyes. We came down here to the foreign doctors to have them taken out, but it was useless; even the foreign-born magician could not make him see again. Then, for many moons, father sat in the sun and

the shade and mourned. A sorrowful spirit entered into him. One day, while he sat in the shade mourning, I went and found a lump of clay and put it in his hands. He pulled and twisted and patted it because he loved to feel of it in his fingers. At night, when my husband came back, the father pulled his ear down against his lips and whispered into it. 'It is a great foolishness,' said my husband to me in the night, 'but we must get it for him. He wants a potter's wheel.'

"So we sent up river by some friends of ours for a wheel exactly like the ones he had used in his youth. Even before the wheel came, a wonderful change came over father. He smiled to himself as he sat in the sun and the shade, and pressed his lump of clay now this way, now that. At last the day came that the wheel was set up in the room just as you see it now, and the pleasant sound of its whirring filled the house. Father touched it all over, piece by piece, as a mother would touch the face of her child. My husband and I stood by him, pleased. I handed him a fresh lump of clay, for we had also sent for a boatload of some of the up-river earth. He stuck it on the wheel. Around flew the wheel. Father's fingers felt their way magically from curve to curve. It was a vase. Then it was my honorable man had the idea of making it a business. We call them the 'lucky vases', because a blind man makes them. That was five years ago, and now our business is good. We have money enough to send our two boys and our one girl to the mission school to learn the wisdom of the world.

And now you see that father smiles and is happy all the day long."

We bought a lucky vase.

"Did you notice what made him happy, Edward?" I asked. "It was work."

Edward didn't notice where my question was leading. "Yes," he said, "a man must have his work."

"And what about a woman?" I asked.

"A woman has love," he said, "and home and babies."

"It is not enough," I said to myself but not aloud to Edward.

Even these mental words startled me. They were the identical words of the Favorite Bride of Li. I was carried swiftly back to the twilight Pool of the Tortoises, when she and I stood beside the lattice, bending over the dim brown water. "It is not enough," she had said, when I reminded her of the love of Li. I understood her perfectly. It was not enough. We were like chrysalises tearing our way with pain and sorrow out from a silken cocoon. Love said, "Stay inside where it is soft and silken and warm." Ah! it was a temptation.

But none of these things did I say to Edward. He would not have understood; he would only have thought I was foolish and fanciful and didn't know my own mind. Perhaps I didn't. Perhaps the bride of Li didn't know what she wanted. She thought it was a son, I thought it was work. We both only knew that the silken cocoon was not enough.

The swift southern night was upon us when we reached the House of Li. It was decked as for a festival: gorgeous lanterns hung at each side of the gate, as long as a man and as round as a barrel. Their yellow candle flames shining through the red paper cast a mellow glow over the doorway. The servants, in fresh, white, long garments, waited to receive us. Smaller lanterns hung about the garden. The guest hall was draped in crimson hangings, and tall red tapers flared on the ancestral table at the end of the room, facing the open threshold of the hall. The mother-in-law, Li Sien San, and his wives and children were assembled to greet us, making a modification of true Chinese etiquette in allowing the women to share in the reception. Doctor Grace was already there. For the feast we separated, the men eating in the great hall itself and we having a room adjoining. Doctor Grace sat at the table of honor with the mother-in-law, and I sat at the next table with Li Ta Ta and the fourth wife. The bare tables were as clean as fresh snow. At each place were placed chopsticks and a small spoon with a short handle of ancient pewter. The servants brought in the first dish, a bowl of clear soup with a single pigeon's egg floating in it. The white of the egg had a translucent appearance like the look of milky blue opal. The Chinese balanced the egg delicately on their chopsticks. I tried it too, but halfway to my mouth it fell back into the bowl of soup with a geyserlike splash. I was chagrined, though I saw it really didn't matter. There was no tablecloth to ruin, and a damp towel

soon made my place as immaculate as before. When the larger bowls of stewed duck were brought in, Li Ta Ta and Pau Tsu vied with each other in helping me to tempting morsels. "Just a little, little more," Li Ta Ta would say, reaching out with her chopsticks to the bowl in the center of the table. She would fish around among the slices of meat till she found one especially savory, then convey it to my tiny saucer. There is something extremely gracious and hospitable in this Chinese manner of picking out a tempting morsel for the guest of honor. It is a relic of the days when hospitality was an art of life, and the host served, the servitors merely bringing in fresh food and clearing away the used dishes. The amahs and children sat at a third table in the same room.

The mother-in-law made a sort of speech. She was talking only to Doctor Grace, but we all listened.

"It is a great pleasure to me and my son Li to invite the foreign-born healers to our humble feast. The feast is to do honor to the foreigner, but not in honor of the little dog that has been born to the house, nor of its low-born mother. As for them, it would be better had they never been born." The mother-in-law cast a malevolent glance at Pau Tsu. I saw the girl shiver. From that time her manner changed. It was as if she had forgotten something unpleasant during the first part of the evening, and had been suddenly reminded of it. She sat silent and wordless and pushed away her food. The baby began to cry. The amah promptly began to nurse it, but still she cried. She refused to

be comforted by food, turned away her head, and cried and cried.

"Take the little dog out of my sight," said the mother-in-law. "Take it where I cannot hear the sound of its howling."

The amah hurried from the room with the wailing baby. We heard the sound of its crying diminish, as an echo grows fainter and fainter. When we heard it no more, the house was strangely still, as if life had left it. Pau Tsu rose without a word and followed it from the room. We heard the patter, patter of her stilted feet through the uncarpeted rooms beyond.

After that the food was tasteless to me, it choked me. I felt I was eating the poisoned dishes of an evil-eyed ogress. I strained my ears, listening for any sound of footsteps or voices in the rooms overhead. By and by the amah came in quietly.

"The mistress sent me back to help with the serving," she said in Li Ta Ta's ear. "She herself has taken the infant and stilled her crying."

On went the interminable feasting. Dish after elaborate dish was placed before us. At the next table Doctor Grace talked easily. Li Ta Ta talked to me, but I didn't hear a word of what she was saying. One thought filled my brain: I must manage to slip out of the room and hunt through the silent upper stories of the house for the girl bride and her baby. I thought of Pau Tsu sitting upstairs, alone in her room, with her baby clasped in her arms, her eyes glazed with misery and bitterness. No one paid any attention to her prolonged absence.

We drank our last sip of the fragrant hot wine poured into tiny, thimble-sized bowls. We nibbled candied lotus buds. We wiped our hands and faces on the perfumed, steaming-hot towels. In the guest hall musicians began a weird, haunting tune. In the confusion of rising from the table, I managed to slip into the back room unobserved. A steep, ladder-like flight of steps confronted me. Holding my skirts high, lest I trip on them in front, I crept up the steps feeling like a thief. When a board creaked I stood still and held my breath, and looked over my shoulder to see if I were followed. At the top of the stairs I hesitated, not knowing which way to turn. The upper floor was deserted; all the children and servants were down at the feasting. I listened, but no sound of breathing, not the rustle of a dress fold, helped me to decide which way to go. I took off my shoes. I couldn't have explained my wish for secrecy, I only knew that my errand would be frustrated by the accompaniment of any one else. To-day I knew that I could comfort Pau Tsu. I had gained the knowledge that comes of true sympathy. I knew I would be able to encourage her, only I must speak to her alone. Not that I had any solution of her difficulty to suggest to her, not at all. I had no solution for my own difficulty, yet I had sympathy and courage.

I stole from room to room, no longer wondering which way to go. I went everywhere, even to the rooms of the servants connected with the main quarters of the house by a narrow balcony at the back. Room after room I found empty and without

an occupant. Why didn't the baby cry again? I repeated my path of search, thinking I must have overlooked some retiring room. The floor was tenantless! From below came the wailing strains of Chinese violins and the clear sound of a flute. Voices, merry and talking together, sounded in a gay babel. I looked from a window of the women's room on the second floor down upon the court in front of the guest hall. It was filled with servants. Our donkeys stood in the shadow of the gateway with their group of donkey boys squatted on the ground beside them. Two sedan chairs and their bearers were in another group. Beggars and a few curious stragglers were peeping through the gateway. Li Sien San and Edward reposed on the couch of honor, smoking. A blaze of light and warmth and rich color shot up into the black blue night from the scene below. A juggler stepped forward from the crowd. They surged about him, carrying him close before Edward and Li. I saw a bright green snake shot up into the air. The crowd shouted with delight. The amahs, emboldened by the preoccupation of the house, joined the fringe of the crowd. At the doorway of the feasting room of the women stood a group of the women of the house.

A great fear suddenly turned me sick. The story of the gatekeeper at the House of the Dead, the unlucky vision of the bride that haunted the Pool of the Tortoises, and Pau Tsu's disappearance filled me with apprehension. Where could she be? I wanted to rush down into the midst of that feasting company and call out to Li, "You have lost your

Loved Pau Tsu." I pictured the commotion, the scattering of the musicians and the revelers. Yet more vividly I knew the anger of the mother-in-law. She would hate the girl more than ever and persecute her — that is, if she were living.

I had hardly any hope left. Carefully, systematically, I re-searched the rooms, pulling back the silken curtains at each bed, and peering into the dim recesses behind. I even slipped my hand in and ran it over the quilts, lest in the darkness of the candles I miss a still form. Bed after bed was empty. Three times I had searched the rooms. I stood still and pressed my hands over my beating heart.

There was still the garden and the swiftly running river along its walls and the deep, deep well where the summer clouds lay like sky flakes in its mirror. Fear lent me wings; I was out in the garden. Beyond the radius of the lanterns' glow, the shadows were black and gloomy. The moon was covered with thin clouds which raced across its surface, driven by a rising wind. The papery leaves of the young bamboo trees shivered. The cypresses hardly moved but cast their black shadows all about me. I ran to the water gate. It was barred, and I could not draw the bolts; I crouched against it and listened. I hardly knew what I was listening for, perhaps a wail or the backward-floating cry of a child. I heard the soft, gentle swish-swish of the silent water and no more. I ran to the well and peered over. It lay, a shaft of impenetrable blackness, before me, yet I waited. The wind rose,

and the thin clouds covering the full moon were torn into shreds and scarfs of chiffon. Full and clear, shining like a silver shield, the moon freed herself of the cloudy drapery. Right down into the well it shone, as I peered over. Deep down I saw a face; I thought it the reflection of my own. Fascinated, I looked and looked. I lifted up my hand and pushed back the hair from my face, but the mirrored face made no such jesture. I screamed with terror. Flying through the yard, I burst into the guest hall where the juggler still juggled, and the musicians played their weird, melancholy music.

"Edward," I cried, "come."

I caught his hands and ran with him through the garden to where the face still looked up at the sailing moon. It seemed to have moved. The moonlight shone on it with soft, tender beams. Beside it cuddled another, smaller, tiny face.

They had found a sanctuary.

XVII

WHERE THERE'S A WILL!

AFTER that dreadful night when we pulled little Pau Tsu and her drowned baby out of the well I sent Edward away. I was thrown into one of those crises of emotion and thought which we all have to pass through; I was utterly unreasonable. It seemed to me that the only happiness for a woman lay in repudiating her womanhood, in becoming a neuter sex like the bee-workers. I suppose I didn't think at all, I simply felt that I couldn't marry, at least not till the horrible impression of the fate of the wives of Li had somewhat worn off.

"I'll wait as long as you want," said Edward, "only don't send me away. Let me be near you. Let me help you now when you need me."

But I couldn't. "You have to go away," I said. "Oh! not far, nor not for long, but so that I do not see you. When I see you, or when you put out your hand and touch me, I can't think. You must give me time to get hold of myself again. Surely, soon I will know what to do. But this is one of the places that a human being must fight through alone, if he wants to be an adult soul."

So I sent him away, and the world turned to utter desolation. He left one morning, just walked out of the house and said he wouldn't be able to see me for a while. I had no address, I didn't know where he was going, or what he was going to do, or when he would come back. I suddenly found I had been very foolish to let him go like that, without knowing all about him. Doctor Donnellon and Miss Laurie were standing around us in the hall when he said good-by, so that I couldn't ask him anything. The days went by in a dragging dreariness. In those desolate hours I learned a great deal more about love than I had known before. I learned, for one thing, that work is only absorbing and satisfactory if the heart is securely anchored. I hated my work; I forced myself out of bed every morning and dragged myself about the wards. The patients were so dirty and smelly! It was such a hopeless task to cure them! And even if I did cure them, there were so many more to be cured! A never-ending stream of sick humanity came in at the gates. I wanted to lie in bed and do nothing, to eat less, and to pity myself. But the pressure of the daily routine saved me, gave me back my sanity again, though it came slowly, inch by inch, through the long months that followed. Doctor Donnellon went away on her vacation. Miss Laurie and I were left alone, and then even Miss Laurie went up-river to a Nurses' Conference. I was busy from morning to night.

One afternoon Mrs. Maitland called with a new nurse. Mrs. Maitland is little and slim and has

been in China twenty-five years. When she first came out, she was a China Inland Mission worker, way up in the interior. Now she is in Shanghai and directs the policy of a chain of girls' boarding schools. I always liked Mrs. Maitland to come to see us. She was my ideal of what a missionary should be, not "goody-goody" at all, nor always preaching, but radiating something happy and peaceful. The Chinese girls idolized her.

"I've brought you a new probationer," she said. "E Tsung" (love and honor).

The prettiest little Chinese girl shook hands with me. She had rosy cheeks and merry brown eyes and a very quick responsive smile.

"She has rather an interesting history," continued Mrs. Maitland. "Almost twenty years ago, when I was in the interior, I was riding along the banks of a canal. It was in the summer, and the water in the canal had shrunk to a mere moving trickle of brown mud. The house boats had been left high and dry on the steep, shelving bank, and a veritable village of mat-sheds had sprung up beside the boats. Four bamboo poles, four square mats of woven fiber and the fifth for the roof made a mat-shed. There were no doors. If you wanted to enter, you picked up one of the flapping mats and crawled in. It was a hot afternoon. All the rest of the mission were indoors. I would not have been out myself but that word had come from one of the Bible women that a convert, an old woman, was very sick in the next village. So I took a wheelbarrow and started out. The wheelbarrow man stopped every

few moments to mop himself. He did it thoroughly, beginning at his eyes and only stopping at his tightly drawn belt. Along this mud river, the stench was horrible. Flies and mosquitoes buzzed in the air. Naked babies and mangy dogs played with each other in front of the huts. At the door of one hut, the mat over the opening was looped back. A crowd of women were gathered about the doorway, wailing aloud. Children hung to the skirts of their mothers. Wisps of unbleached white cloth were tied around the arms of two or three of the mourners. My wheelbarrow man stopped to rest and dry off. I got down from my narrow shelf on one side of the wheel and approached the mourners.

"'The old woman has become nothing,' they said. 'She died this morning. Her daughter died yesterday. There remains only the young aunt and this new-born baby.'

"'Where is the father?' I asked.

"'We know not the father,' they replied. 'The aunt says he is a river man who comes by here when the river is in flood, but no one knows him. We think to bury the baby with her mother, for there is no one to care for it.'

"'Yes,' said the aunt, 'we must bury the baby. I am about to go to the home of my mother-in-law, and I cannot take a sucking child with me. We will bury them all three together in one coffin.'

"Within the hut, which was no bigger than a large packing box, lay the dead bodies of two women. In the crook of a dead woman's elbow lay a little, warm, living child. It had been wrapped in rags,

filthy rags, full of lice, but it lay there, in the bend of the dead woman's arm, contented and smiling. It was so young that it was not yet hungry.

"'Give it to me,' I said.

"Some one caught up the baby and placed her in my arms.

"'Yes, yes, we will give the baby to the foreign-born healer to be her adopted child. We do not want the baby at all. We would bury the baby alive. It will be more better that the foreign-born teacher take the child for her own.'

"'The women clamored around me. I was silent with astonishment. I had only wanted to see the baby when I said 'give her to me.' But to them my request had suggested a way out of the difficulty. The baby snuggled against me as if she were glad not to be pressed against that cold, dead body any longer. I was a new missionary. I knew that often the mission was involved in legal difficulties by just such a gift of transfer, yet I could not go away and put that baby back beside its dead mother. My wheelbarrow man decided the question for me. I don't know how long I would have stood there, pondering. 'Come, Missey,' he said. 'Too muchee hot. Must go on.'

"I wrote my name and address on a slip of paper and gave it to the aunt. I also took her name and the name of her mother-in-law, who lived in an adjoining hut. I didn't promise to adopt the baby, as they all wanted, but I did tell them I would look after it. I made the aunt say she would come to the mission once a month to see the child.

"I got back on the wheelbarrow with the strange, dirty beggar baby in my arms. At the house of the convert I found the old woman much better. Together we dressed and washed the baby and gave it its first feeding of warm goat's milk. The old woman took a fancy to the child. She said to me she knew more about bringing up babies than I did — I wasn't married then. She said also that she knew what it was necessary for a Chinese child to know. She asked me to leave the baby with her, to bring up till she was old enough to go to the mission boarding school. That is the story of E Tsung. She graduated at the mission boarding school last spring. She is only eighteen and she chooses not to be married yet. She herself asked to be a nurse."

That was how Pretty came to us. She was the gayest, most agile youngster. Nothing was too hard for her, nothing too tiring. Everything interested her. Miss Laurie fell in love with her at once. "That girl will make a good nurse," she said enthusiastically. "She is worth any amount of training. But I suppose she will get married right away and spoil it all. She can manage anybody."

We started volley ball that fall for the nurses. We strung up an old tennis net in the yard and divided the girls into two teams. When they took off their aprons to play, they looked the cutest, most frolicsome set of children on earth. And Pretty was the quickest and brightest among them; she was a universal favorite. Another pastime of the nurses

was the Virginia Reel. I sat at the little organ and played the Swanee River, the only tune I knew, and the nurses danced their cheeks pink. They were more like irresponsible children than independent, trained nurses. Miss Laurie used to worry over it.

"How shall I ever make them grow up and take responsibility?" she said.

"You can't," I answered. "It will happen of itself. You can't make them into American women. You must let them take their time. You have to treat them like boarding-school girls."

Whenever the girls went out, they were accompanied by an amah, a respectable and trustworthy woman we employed just for that purpose.

One afternoon Pretty and A-doo and the chaperone went out together. About five o'clock A-doo and the amah came back. They hurried across the compound and asked for Miss Laurie, but Miss Laurie was out, so I saw them.

"E Tsung is gone," they said.

"Gone where?" I asked.

"We do not know," they said. "Simply she is gone. We walked along Bubbling Well and then down Nanking Road, looking in the shop windows. We came to the new Chinese theater where there is a magic box which shoots one rapidly up to the top of the building. From the roof one can see all the world. E Tsung said she wanted to go up. We would not have gone of ourselves, but E Tsung wanted to. Also we had heard the matron, who had gone up, say it was harmless. We had to pay a little, but we had enough money. I felt a very

terrifying sickness as we left the earth," said A-doo. "I looked at E Tsung, and she looked as if she would soon lose her eyes; they were popping out of her head. But she said she liked it. At the top we got out on a kind of square platform and looked off in all directions at all the world. We saw the Whangpoo and the boats and the yellow mist where lies the Great Yangtse. We were very busy looking first this way and that. We were higher than the Loong Wha pagoda. We saw its tower on a level with our eyes across the fields. We could look down on Nanking Road and see the carriages crawling as slowly as ants. Then we looked for E Tsung, and she was gone. We asked everybody, but no one had seen her. How could she leave but by the rising and falling box? And how could she have vanished without our knowledge?"

A-doo and the amah were very much excited, and so, for that matter, was I. The loss of a girl in Shanghai is no laughing matter, especially of such a young and pretty one as E Tsung. She had never been out alone in all her life. I told A-doo and the amah not to tell any of the nurses of Pretty's disappearance, for I did not want to ruin the girl's reputation while there yet might be hope of her coming back. I didn't know what to do, so I phoned Mrs. Maitland.

"E Tsung is here," she said. "I have told her she must never run away like that again. I have told her to go right to you and apologize."

I was weak with the sudden relief. Half an hour later, E Tsung came, all contrition and smiles,

to offer her excuses. Chinese excuses are invariably works of art, but hers was a masterpiece.

"My heart came up into my mouth when we were carried up so far into the clouds," she said. "The earth was changed and strange. I was afraid it would vanish and be there no longer. Already it was only a mirage. I turned around quickly and sprang back into the descending box before it should go down and leave me away from everybody, up in the clouds. At the bottom, I waited and waited, half a day, for A-doo and the amah. They came not. I felt in my heart that some evil thing had happened to them. I was afraid to come back to the hospital without them, so I called a ricksha and went to the home of my adopted mother. She scolded me for having run away like that and said you would be very much worried. I am sorry for my wickedness and foolishness."

She was very contrite. Her breath came quickly, and her eyes watched my face for signs of anger. She twisted a corner of her jacket in her fingers. I scolded her severely, and forgave her, then dismissed her with a heart full of thankfulness that no harm had come of the episode. I got up and walked to my window, without any plan of espionage in my action. I was only moving around aimlessly, as we all do at times. I saw Pretty pause a moment on the threshold, look cautiously around, dance down a few steps, then wave her hands towards the houses on the left. After waving, she stopped as if waiting an answering signal. Evidently it came, for she waved again and ran back to the hospital.

All my peace of mind was gone. An intrigue was brewing. I knew it, I felt it in my bones. Pretty's little air of triumph when she waved her hand at the invisible watcher had betrayed her. Miss Laurie came home soon, and I told her all the story. "I don't see how you can suspect her," she said indignantly. "I would as soon suspect my sister. She is too honest, too self-reliant to do anything underhand. She was only waving her hand with relief at your forgiveness. Did you see anybody return her salute?"

"No," I said. "But don't forget that the Paulun Hospital is visible through the alley. I myself have seen the Chinese interns in their white uniforms on the upper balcony."

"You don't mean to say you think she would carry on a flirtation with one of them?"

"I don't know," I said, "but that is what I was thinking."

"Chinese girls don't do such things," said Miss Laurie. "Our girls wouldn't. They are too nice."

"Anybody will," I said. "It's not a question of being nice or not. It's a question of life. I think we ought to guard the girls more carefully. Independence is fermenting in the air. It's a dangerous time."

"You want to coddle the nurses and make babies of them," said Miss Laurie. "I want to make them self-respecting women."

"So do I," I agreed. "Only I want to watch over them while they are young, so that they will never have an occasion for loss of self-respect."

"You suspect them," asserted Miss Laurie. "I think it is an insult."

"I know," I replied.

There the matter dropped. When one day Mrs. Maitland came to tea, I told her my suspicions. She was Pretty's godmother, and I didn't want the responsibility on my soul. She agreed with Miss Laurie, so, little by little, my apprehension was stilled.

One morning I went over to the hospital earlier than usual. On the steps the nurses were gathered around a flower woman. The flower-seller held a round, shallow basket slung over her shoulder by a string. The basket was full of tiny flower buds, tied on invisible wires, ready to be hung on the studs that close a woman's dress on the shoulders, or to be stuck in the hair. The nurses were buying. Pretty stood at one side of the group, a flower lying unobserved at her feet, and in her hand a letter. It was a long, thin Chinese letter, written on double rice paper. I saw the graceful straggling characters going up and down the page from top to bottom. Pretty was utterly engrossed; her cheeks were a bright pink.

The matron, Wang S Moo, came out of the counting room, and saw me looking at Pretty. She beckoned to me with her eyes. I followed her into the office and closed the door.

"Every day it is so," said Wang S Moo. "The postman brings a letter for E Tsung. When I ask her who writes it, she looks at me angrily and says, 'It is from my aunt.' But all the world knows her

aunt lives in a mat-shed and can neither read nor write. The nurses say, when she has her off hours, she goes into her room and shuts the door, and refuses to let any one come in. But one of the nurses looked through the keyhole and saw her writing a letter. The gateman says that every day E Tsung gives him a cash to post a letter for her. If you wish, I will tell the gateman not to post the letter, but to give it to you. Then we will find out all about the mischief."

"Oh, we couldn't do that," I exclaimed, aghast at the systematic, curious spying.

"We must do something," said the matron. "E Tsung no longer does her work. When she makes the beds in the morning she does not sweep out the crumbs, she merely pulls the quilt straight. She boasts to the other girls that she will soon be rich and not have to work any more."

"This is dreadful," I said helplessly. "I will tell Miss Laurie." Miss Laurie, however, was inclined to believe that the matron had a spite against the girl because she was so quick and clever and did her work so well. Miss Laurie refused to accept such evidence. "But I tell you what I will do," she said, "I will call all the nurses together and announce the rule that no girl may receive letters that are not first opened by me. I hate to do it, it seems so suspicious, but we don't want anything to happen to that child. That will put an end to the correspondence."

A few of the advanced spirits among the nurses resented the innovation. Daily the postman handed

the letters to Miss Laurie, but Pretty got no more, and we congratulated ourselves that the incident was closed. Then one afternoon I went over to the hospital about five o'clock, the time I was least likely to be there. In the front hall, sitting on one of the stiff guest chairs reserved for relatives of the sick, sat a dapper young Chinese man, and before him stood Pretty, dressed in her best clothes, blushing and smiling. "Who is this man?" I asked severely.

"My uncle," said Pretty promptly.

"Do you not know you cannot receive men in this hospital?" I asked.

"Not strangers, of course," said Pretty, "but an uncle —"

"No, not a young uncle," I said. "It is not good custom. If the nurses in the hospital do not observe good custom, no one will want to send their daughters to us to be trained for the honorable calling of nurse."

I sent him off, and I ordered Pretty up to her room for the rest of the day.

"I think we will have to send her back to Mrs. Maitland," I said to Miss Laurie. "Something is going on. I don't trust her."

"That is just the trouble," said Miss Laurie. "Neither of us trusts her. The matron suspects her and spies on her. The other nurses are jealous and envious."

"But what can we do," I asked

"I'll go over and have a talk with her," said Miss Laurie. "Won't you come too?"

This was not according to Chinese etiquette, that the superiors should go to the inferiors, but it was

true Christianity. We had come to break down just such barriers between woman and woman, barriers that prevent the stretching across of a helping hand. We decided to wait till after supper. The appalling lack of privacy in all Chinese life defeated our purpose of seeing Pretty alone. First we made rounds. The wards were peaceful and quiet. A little new baby lay asleep in its white crib in the mother's ward. Its mother opened her eyes at the sound of our footsteps and put out her hand and patted the baby. The night nurses followed us with a candle, ready to light it, tip it over, so that a bit of melted wax might drop on the seat of a stool or a table, and stick the candle in its waxen socket. The long rooms were dimly lit by the faint night bulbs. On the third story I leaned out over the railing and looked far and wide over the city. A gash of light across the sky marked the path of Nanking Road through the town. The lighted face of the clock on the watch tower shone like a golden moon. Dark and silent and closely packed together lay the plastered houses around us. Directly in front rose the dark outline of the Paulun Hospital. It too was dimmed for the night, but across the lighted doorways figures could be seen passing and repassing. I fancied I saw a figure come out of a French window on the second-story verandah and walk to and fro. It was discernible like a moving white spot.

The two night nurses, hand in hand, followed us around. "It is very black to-night," one said, "I hope it will not be necessary to cross the compound

to call the doctor. I am always afraid to leave the hospital when it is so dark. Also I hope the sick woman will not die to-night. I do not like them to die on dark nights."

I turned to the bed behind me. The patient, a young girl of about sixteen, lay dying of consumption. She had been a hopeless case from the start, but nevertheless I hated to lose her. She put out a feeble hand and caught a fold of my dress to attract my attention.

"I fear," she whispered. I bent over her. "Do not fear," I said in answer. "The Lord Jesus forgets no one."

"I know," she said, "but it is hard to remember in the darkness."

We lit a candle at her bedside. Its tiny flicker of light only accentuated the gloom, but it pleased her. I told the nurses to stay with her as much as possible. Back we went, down through the peaceful wards, across the court, and up the stairs to the nurses' quarters. We walked on tiptoe, we didn't speak. I know the thought in both our hearts was one and the same — to reach Pretty's room unobserved. But it was quite a useless and futile hope. At the head of the stairs we met Me Li going for a bath, with her towel hung over her arm. "Sien San has come," she announced. Along the corridor doors flew open. In a moment we were surrounded by a throng of nurses. They were so slim and childish in their striped trousers and jackets of blue and white that I always felt like a grandmother among them. So caught, we made

the round of their rooms, a proceeding which we do every so often. At Pretty's door we knocked.

"She is not in," said Me Li.

"Not in," we repeated in amazement. "How do you know?"

"I can't get in," said Me Li. "I have been rooming with her for the last month, but tonight, when I came off duty, I could not open the door. I tried the lock; it was bolted. I looked through the keyhole, and the room was empty."

"You shouldn't spy on a roommate," said Miss Laurie quickly.

"It was my room too," said Me Li.

"That was before supper," said A-doo. "If she had not come back soon, I was coming over to tell Miss Laurie."

"It is a shameful thing," said one of the new nurses. "My father will take me away if such affairs go on here."

"Yes," said Me Li, "we think you should not let her come back when she wants to."

"Yes, that is the proper custom," chorused the girls.

I looked at Miss Laurie in consternation.

"If she comes back," I said, "we cannot turn her out."

"It would be good custom," insisted the girls.

Their attitude of prying curiosity exasperated us, but by this time we knew that this very attitude was one of the Chinese safeguards of conduct. In such a communal life, no secrecy could succeed. We were gathered at the head of the stairs, we on

the steps, the nurses in the hall. Through the open doors of their rooms we saw their little iron bedsteads and the chests of drawers and their small trunks covered with white leather and clasped with brass hasps. Directly in front of me was A-doo's room. On the dressing table stood the tiny vanity box of Chinese women with its mirror and case for hair ornaments. Next was the closed, locked door of Pretty's room. On the gravel of the driveway we heard the wheels of a ricksha and the sharp tones of bargaining. Evidently the man was easily contented, for the wheels turned and rumbled back to the gateway slowly. Quick steps sounded on the stairs behind us, and Pretty came running up. She was upon Miss Laurie before she knew it. When she would have drawn back, Miss Laurie flung out an arm and caught the girl around her waist. Pretty deserved her nickname. She wore a suit of white satin with a thin gauze skirt, which in the accepted manner of Chinese summer skirts, showed her satin trousers plainly. Her black hair was worn in one of the most stylish fashions of the moment. Heavy bangs, cut short over the forehead and long over the temples, hanging down the side of her face as far as the tips of her ears, ringed her glowing face like an ebony frame. Two heavy plaits were wound around her head in a borrowed Gretchen fashion.

For one dramatic instant we were all silent. Then the nurses broke out in vituperation.

"I wish not a sound," said Miss Laurie authoritatively, holding up a silencing hand. "Where have you been, E Tsung?"

"I cannot say," said Pretty.

"But you must say when I ask you," said Miss Laurie. "You know the rules of the Training School. No girl is ever permitted to go out alone after dark. It is bad custom. You yourself know it is not proper custom for a Chinese young girl. Every one will say words that are not good to hear."

Pretty drew herself away from Miss Laurie's arm.

"It is all true, what you say," she said. "I know it is not proper Chinese custom. I know what people will say, Me Li especially. But what have you come here for, but to teach us new customs that shall be proper for Chinese women as well as foreign women? You tell us we must not worship our fathers. There was no custom more sacred than that. If we do not worship our fathers, what matters it what class of strangeness we do? Often have I seen Miss Laurie and Au-I-Sung go out at night. Sometimes alone, sometimes with a man who is not relation. No one says wicked words. It is proper American custom. Why shall it not be proper Chinese custom? I have done nothing wrong."

How could we explain the difference, the danger, in the face of the scandalized nurses, to the bright, defiant eyes of Pretty?

"Go to your room and stay there till I send for you," said Miss Laurie. "Your meals will be brought up to you. When you came here, you agreed to obey our rules, and you have disobeyed."

Miss Laurie went into the room with Pretty. I shooed the rest to their room and gave them some

useless words of advice on forgiveness and forbearance.

"Her grandmother lived in a mat-shed," murmured Me Li.

I was baffled, as much by the rest of the nurses as by Pretty. I knew how Pretty felt. She belonged to the new generation. The new wine had burst the old wine skins and was spilling and wasting itself riotously. Before the direct, fearless look of her eyes I had no answer. I felt instinctively as I waited on the front steps of the house for Miss Laurie, that the ancient method of confinement would have no salutary effect on her.

A little glowworm opened and shut its wings on the rosebush at my side. What a worm-miracle it was, radiant, slight, swaying at night on the branch of the rose bush. It enthralled me as I watched. I fastened my eyes on the spot and waited for the coming glimpse of soft light. No wonder the women of the south sea wore them as jewels in their hair, living jewels!

A din of beaten drums and the chant of priests came down the street, transforming the night from a silent beauty into a vivid, pulsating thing of human events. It was a funeral procession. I walked out to the gate to watch it. The street was alive and gay. Children pulled toy animals, of painted paper lighted within by a candle, along the flags of the market place. The funeral was small and meager. A few boys with their circular parasols, more like lamp shades than sunshades, followed the priests. It wasn't the burial proper, only the

carrying of the coffin to the coffin house. At the money changer's across the way the men leaned on the counter, naked from the waist up, and smoked and chatted. The eat-shop next door was filled with coolies. An opium den, silent and shadowy, with its sign hung far out over the door, was faintly lit. Farther down the street came a break in the light, a crack of darkness which marked the mouth of a back alley. A large automobile waited in front of the curb at the entrance of the alley. Another glided up noiselessly, and two Chinese in handsome silks got out quickly and hurried into the darkness of the alley. A gambling den! Along the curb sat men and women on tiny four-legged stools enjoying the coolness of the evening air. Worlds upon worlds crowded upon me, one world of the lit, gay street, another of the quiet dim compound but a few yards away, and yet another of the small neat room with its iron bedstead and chest of drawers and dressing case where Miss Laurie talked with Pretty, and yet another of my own consciousness and its bitter wants and needs.

"What did you accomplish?" I asked Miss Laurie, when she came.

"Nothing," she said. "She wouldn't tell me anything about where she had been or what she had been doing. She said a thousand times she had done nothing wrong and asked me to trust her. I said I did trust her, but that she must obey the rules of the hospital. She said that wasn't trusting her. We went over and over the same ground. Finally I locked her in, and said she was to stay in

her room till I came back from Wusih. That will be three days. I wish I were not going. However, it can't be helped. If she is repentant, she will have to make a public apology and then we'll forgive her. If she isn't she will have to be sent back to Mrs. Maitland. We can't have the responsibility of looking after her if she won't obey."

Miss Laurie left by the early morning train. The nurses volunteered the information that Pretty had refused to let the amah in. She had not taken her breakfast. I was not surprised at that. Dinner at noon she also refused. She maintained a sullen silence. I could not stand it; I was afraid she would do something desperate. I chose a moment when all the nurses were at their busiest in clinic, and went upstairs on my tiptoes. I drew the key stealthily from my pocket and opened the door. I stepped inside quickly and closed it after me. The room was empty. My heart suddenly began to beat suffocatingly. I turned the key in the lock behind me as I wished to be undisturbed, and went over to the bed in the corner. I could not tell whether it had been slept in or not, for its smooth matting betrayed no creases. I opened the drawers. They were full of clothes. A little dressing case open stood on the top of the bureau. A pigskin box was unlocked. I could not be sure, but, to my eyes, the room looked as if it had just been left for a moment, as if its occupant meant to return shortly. A picture of Mrs. Maitland and another of the mission school hung on the wall. One of Pretty herself, holding tightly to the ear of a bronze griffon, stood

unframed on the dresser. I went to the window. The roof of the veranda sloped steeply towards the ground. The drop from it would be not more than ten feet. On a nail at the edge of the roof I caught sight of a piece of black gauze. At least she had not taken opium! Would she come back, or had she gone forever? And where?

I listened along the corridor, but no one was stirring, so I stuffed the keyhole with a bit of cotton to keep the empty room from the prying eyes of Me Li, and escaped unobserved. I rushed through clinic and set out for Mrs. Maitland's. I did not like to telephone the news. I wanted to save Pretty, and somehow I felt sure that Mrs. Maitland would know a way. I almost hoped I might find Pretty there, for Mrs. Maitland was the kind of woman to whom a girl could go with any trouble. To my eager mind, that warm afternoon, man-power seemed a snail-like way of covering distance. The naked waist of my runner glistened with sweat. He shook his head violently every so often, and a spray of moisture flew into the air. On the benches along the houses, narrow as a hand's-breadth, men lay full length asleep. Everywhere was the incessant whir of fans, round and oval and conical, fanning faces and backs and stomachs. On an empty lot a circle of horses were exercising. At the head of each animal walked its keeper. In the center of the slowly, ever-revolving circle, stood a man with a bird cage, containing a black minne bird with a yellow beak, singing. The whirling horses and the whirling men were utterly silent, as if mesmerized by

the thin piping of the captive bird. The gold signs on their ebony backgrounds waved languidly before the shops on Nanking Road. Over the high counters in the open shops appeared the bronze bodies of the jacketless clerks. Silent, smoking water pipes, they leaned on the counter, gazing inscrutably into the future. Before the newest jeweler shop, the manikins of plaster in embroidered robes revolved tirelessly over the doorway. We were the only objects in sight that moved faster than a snail's pace, and that was only out of deference to the wishes of the foreign devil in the ricksha. It is well known that when a foreign devil wishes to go anywhere, he wishes to be there at once. Panting and dripping, my puller ran on. On the bund a breath of freshness met us. Across the river, Phootung was half hidden in foliage. The feeble air but flapped in the sails of the junks. Already the benches along the water front were filled with foreign babies and their amahs. My eyes slipped idly over them. In the garden the band was playing.

"Stop! Stop!" I cried, leaping out before the shafts touched the ground. I darted across the street and caught hold of Pretty, who was deep in conversation with a handsome youth. I had neither words nor breath left to speak, but I held her tightly. Night had not yet come, she was safe. "Oh! E Tsung," I cried at last, "why did you run away?"

"I had to," she said. "You would not let me meet him. I must see him."

I looked at the man. He wore a white flannel suit of foreign cut and looked very dapper and handsome.

THE BIRD FANCIERS

"Who is he!" I asked.

"He is my future husband," Pretty answered.

The answer took my breath away. But one solution appeared to my dazed faculties. We would go to Mrs. Maitland. She would know what to do.

"Call a ricksha," I said to the man, "and follow us. I will take E Tsung with me."

"Where are you taking me?" asked Pretty.

"To Mrs. Maitland," I answered.

They made no objection. I took Pretty on my lap as an amah takes her mistress. The runner demurred, but I promised him double the fare. Holding her on my knees in the intimate way one holds a little child, I could feel no anger at her. In fact, I had not been as much angry as worried all along. I wanted to save her. There was something so utterly lovable about her, one could not help liking her. After we had ridden in silence a block or so, Pretty's hand stole into mine.

"You will understand, Au-I-Sung," she said. "You also love the foreign man. Days when he comes not to see you, your heart is sad and heavy. I know, for I have watched the look in your eyes. At first I did not know what made you so different, some days so merry, as if the sunshine lived in your eyes, and some days so sad, as if your heart were crying. But lately I have understood. I could not pass a day without seeing him. I had to run away. You are not angry, are you?"

"No, E Tsung," I said, "I am not angry. If you wished to be married, why did you not tell us, so

that we could have arranged it for you in an honorable manner."

"No," she said, "I did not want it arranged. I wanted to do it myself."

"Who is this man?" I asked. "What do you know about him? Where did you meet him?"

"He is Li-I-Sung. I met him at the house of a school friend of mine, that first day I ran away from A-doo and the amah. I had in my heart no wickedness that day, but to run away and see my school friend. She is married and has a baby. I wanted to see the baby. Her husband was there, also Li-I-Sung. They also were schoolmates. Li-I-Sung has studied the foreign medicine already three years. When I saw him I wanted to marry him at once, and I asked him if he would like it. I think he wanted to marry me at once too. He works at the Paulun Hospital. But we couldn't marry at once. We planned a signal of hand wavings and letters, and we used to meet every afternoon at the corner. The day I was out at night, I had not been able to go to meet him in the afternoon, and so I had to go after supper."

Mrs. Maitland looked very serious at the tale. "You cannot marry Mr. Li now, at once," she said. "It is not seemly. You will have to return to the mat-shed of your aunt and eat the rice and water of bitterness. Do you not know that Mr. Li must first finish his course? If he marries he will have to leave."

"That is a foolish and unjust custom," said Pretty, "but it can't be helped. He will have to

leave. As for sending me back to the mat-shed of my aunt, that also is useless. I would run away before your wheelbarrow were out of sight."

"What, then, will you do?"

"I will marry Mr. Li."

Mrs. Maitland turned to Mr. Li. He was evidently in love with Pretty but would have been open to reason. He regretted the necessity of not finishing his course but would rather do that than not get Pretty. Again Mrs. Maitland tried to make Pretty see reason, to persuade her to wait six months till Mr. Li finished his course. "I cannot wait," she said. "You must understand how I feel. If he does not marry me now, I will kill myself."

She had her way. Then and there, they were married in the parlor of the mission house, Mrs. Maitland and I being the witnesses. That evening we saw them off on the train for Wusih, for Mr. Li said he knew enough medicine to make a living there. My eyes were full of tears as I watched them go, young, alone, eloping like any western couple caught in the toils of a great love.

XVIII

THE SEEKING HAND

A-DOO was convalescing from typhoid. She had had a very mild case and could hardly be persuaded to stay in bed a full three weeks. Tomorrow she was to be allowed up for the first time. It was Sunday afternoon, and I was preaching in the chapel. The room was full of patients and a host of their friends. I was speaking on the parable of the Good Shepherd. The congregation leaned forward, hanging over the backs of the benches in front in their eagerness to hear and understand. The story, in the telling simplicity of Chinese phrases, held a startling power. I was thrilled by it myself, as if hearing it for the first time, and to the audience it was as magic as a fairy tale, this story of a searching and finding God. Pictures of their idols rose to my mind, the pair of kitchen gods sitting side by side on a ledge in the cement over the stove, ready to curse or bless, according to the amount and tastiness of the food offerings placed before them; the wooden painted idols in the shrines in the native city covered with the dirt of ages who, as the matron scornfully said, "can't even lift their hands to wash their faces"; and the great bronze Buddhas sitting cross-legged on their dais, looking

out over the centuries with inscrutable calm. I saw them worshiping their idols, knocking their foreheads on the cold stones at the feet of the images, bound and tortured by fear and yearning. No wonder they listened with bated breath to the story of a God who went after the lost to seek and to find. I heard low murmurs run through the crowd, "Wonderful!" "It is not to be believed!" "The words are good to hear!" "What is the meaning?" Wonder, I think, was the principal expression on their faces, wonder and a shy delight, much as you or I would feel if we were suddenly told we had wings and could fly up into the sky at will. Then we sang the old gospel hymn, "Jesus loves me." The Chinese words are simple, and the tune went with a swing. Enough of the nurses and patients who knew the hymn were there to make it go.

We were at the third verse when Little Wang, who was on duty in the wards, slipped in and touched my arm.

"Come quickly," she said, "a man is killing A-doo."

I left them singing the hymn and ran along through the half empty ward with Little Wang. Sounds rose up to meet us — the loud angry tones of a man's voice and a sobbing, pleading woman's voice. I burst open the door of A-doo's room. A tall rough man was leaning over her bed, shaking her violently by the shoulders, speaking all the time. He repeated his words over and over again. "You must come. You must do as I tell you. Are you not mine! Get up and come."

"I can't. I have been sick," A-doo cried.

I flew at the man and jerked him away by the back of his coat.

"Go," I said, pointing at the door. "Go quickly before I have you arrested. And if I ever see you here again, I will send for the police. Do you hear me? Go!"

If I had been less angry or had hesitated, I might not have gotten rid of him so easily, though in Shanghai lower-class Chinese are accustomed to obeying the foreigner. The man hung a moment in the doorway, then turned and hurried down the stairs. I ran over to the window and poked my head out, to be sure that he had left the compound. I saw him hesitate at the gate, but I shook my fist at him, and he disappeared. Then I turned to A-doo, who was crying desperately. The entire congregation had adjourned and followed me through the ward to A-doo's room and now was crowding around A-doo's bed. I took the nearest gently by the shoulders and pushed them towards the door. A babel of questions arose. Feeling how humiliating this swarm of curious onlookers must be to A-doo, I urged them vigorously towards the door.

Suddenly A-doo sat up in bed and flung out her hands dramatically towards us. Her pale face, her red and swollen eyes, her disheveled hair, lent her figure the strange, arresting menace of despair. The crowd, which had been yielding to my pressure and ebbing through the door, now surged back and filled the room. The hospital amahs, the coolies, the patients and their visitors, all were huddled in a close-breathing group in the small room. As if

caught on the crest of a wave, the crowd, pressing forward to A-doo's bed, had carried me ahead. I stood close beside her

"Let them go, A-doo," I said.

"In a little moment," she said. "They must first hear my woe. Listen, all ye who pass by, and hear my woe and see the bitterness which I have eaten. That man who was killing me is my husband. Ten years have I supported him by the work of my hands, him and my old mother. Too much is it for a woman. I work and am paid, then in the night comes my husband and threatens to kill me or to sell me, unless I give him my money. Sometimes he finds it all, and sometimes he only finds a part, for I hide it in many different places. Then he takes it and drinks and gambles. When he wants more he sets my mother-in-law to upbraid me. She fills me with fear, because she lives close beside my mother, in the village street, and when I do not give him enough money, she torments my mother. She sits at the gate of her courtyard and reviles the name of my mother to all the passers-by. Then, at last, even my mother comes to me to beg me to give up more money. I have none left. For two years I had peace. I was like a little girl, free and unafraid on the streets, for my husband was in prison. He stole a pair of blankets from a foreign woman, and the foreign man put him in prison. But what is a pair of blankets to what he has stolen from me! All my money which I was saving for the old age of my mother, who has no son, all my peace and happiness. The taste of bitterness, only bitterness, is in my

mouth for many days. And now I will pray the foreign doctor to have my husband put in prison again; only thus shall I have peace and security."

During this recital, the audience listened spell-bound. A-doo fell back exhausted. "Miserable one," murmured the crowd. A few old women hovered around the bed with advice, but the rest of the audience melted away. Baffled by the utter foreignness of A-doo's proceeding, I stood at the foot of the bed, not knowing what to say. A-doo began to cry again, so I sent little Wang for a quieting dose and led the last lingering gossips from the room. "Why did you excite yourself so, A-doo?" I asked.

"I had to," she answered. "All those people would have gone away wondering what was the matter. They would have said terrible things about me, about the hospital, about the foreign doctors. I had to tell them. Besides, it is good Chinese custom. In the villages, if a woman has a bitterness past bearing alone, she goes to the scolding place and cries out her trouble to all the world that passes by. Then, after that, if her trouble is just, the village folk all sympathize with her and do not slander her. Truly it is a good custom. Already my heart feels lighter. Do not worry. The wretched man, my husband, is now thoroughly scared by the fierceness of the foreign woman. He will not come back for a long time. Also because he thinks he has all my money, but he has not. See."

A-doo opened the sliding cover of her dressing box which stood on the little table by the bedside. She slipped back one shelf after the other and in the

undermost, hidden under her hair ornaments, lay a roll of bills. She took them out and counted them over carefully. "Fifty," she said. "That will buy my mother rice till she dies. I have been saving it for many years."

The next day A-doo was worse. Her relapse was a much more serious affair than the original attack, and she rallied very slowly. One day I found a country woman sitting at her bedside when I went in in the morning. She was a little, shriveled woman with wisps of gray hair pulled back from her face. Her brown eyes were bright, and her shrunken cheeks were ruddy with the marvelous health of the aged country folk. She was neatly dressed in faded blue cotton.

"My mother-in-law," said A-doo.

"I have come to take my dear daughter home," said the mother-in-law. "When a Chinese woman gets sick, then it is time for her to go home and not to eat the rice of strangers. We will start this afternoon."

The woman's bright, beady eyes held me like a snake's eyes. The simple assurance of her statement aroused my antagonism. I stole a swift glance at A-doo. She was looking at me with a painful questioning. She did not want to go. Assured of that, I knew what course to take. I told the old hag firmly that I was the doctor of the house and that everybody had to obey my orders. I told her that A-doo was not well enough to go, and that I would not permit her to go. This made no impression on the old woman.

"She is the wife of my son," she repeated. "He wishes her at home. She will have to come. If she stays here and dies, the burden will be on your body. A foreign woman cannot know what a Chinese woman needs when she is sick. She must come home. I have come to take her. I rose up very early this morning before yet the sun had climbed the hill of heaven and came down the river in a boat. This afternoon we will go back when the shadows begin to grow longer."

A-doo's face was flushed. A glittering, shining luster appeared in her eyes. I knew she was growing excited, and I feared a return of her temperature, so I took the obstinate old creature by the elbow and led her from A-doo's room. Nor did I allow her to go back. I set a guard on the room, one nurse inside and one nurse outside, and we circumvented the mother-in-law. Perhaps it would have been better if I had let A-doo go at once. I was no match for the woman.

"You do not want to go, A-doo?" I asked.

"No, no," A-doo said, catching hold of my hand. "Do not let her get me. She wants my money. She hates me. She will torture me. I fear her more than I fear my husband. Keep me. Save me."

"Don't worry," I said, foolish in my strength. "They shall not hurt you. I will not let you go, I will keep you. They cannot hurt you."

A-doo laid my hand against her forehead. "You are as my father and mother to me," she said.

The little old witchlike woman hung around the compound all day, but by evening she was gone.

I heaved a sigh of relief, for I felt we were out of the woods. I had disposed of both the husband and the mother-in-law. Beware! The foreigner who thinks he has bested a Chinese mother-in-law! A week went by uneventfully, A-doo improved daily so that I let her get up and around. She ate her rice with relish and asked for a piece of foreign bread. She too seemed to have forgotten her trouble and to be once more the serene and smiling A-doo who had stood by me so manfully in the days of my greenness. I wondered at her calmness. I had not known her story in any detail, but I remembered Doctor Donnellon saying that A-doo was not a widow, as I had supposed, but a married woman, and that her husband was a rascal. The knowledge had gone out of my mind at once. Now, whenever I saw her, I thought of it and of the sudden revelation I had had of the hidden bitterness of her life. That woman, with the distorted face and accusing words, pouring forth her woes in a torrent to the unknown listeners, seemed to me a stranger from the capable, smiling A-doo of the operating room. I wondered had she two personalities? Was this one of the incomprehensible cases of dissociation of the ego? Had she an ancient Chinese individuality and a superimposed foreign-trained personality? I only knew that to me, the two A-doos were as distinct as two people. I was yet to meet a third.

One morning after chapel Little Wang said to me, "A-doo's mother has come. She wants her to come home."

"Her own mother?" I asked. "Not her mother-in-law?"

"Yes, her own mother," Little Wang answered.

I found her sitting at the bedside of A-doo. She was utterly different from the mother-in-law. She was a large, placid woman with the kindly, benevolent eyes and smile that one often sees in old Chinese people. She wore hoops of blue enamel in her ears, and her hair ornaments were of the same. Her scanty black hair was brushed neatly and twisted in a tight small roll at the back of her head. Yet her face had not the force of the face of the mother-in-law. In her I felt no sinister, malignant power.

"Do you want to go home?" I asked A-doo. "You are well enough to go now if you want to. A change and vacation would be good for you. But I will not let you go, if you do not want to. You must tell me truly. Do you want to go of your own free will?"

"Yes," said A-doo. "My mother wants me, therefore I must go."

"Not unless you yourself want to go," I insisted.

"I myself wish to go," said A-doo.

Yet somehow her words did not satisfy me. She repeated them too mechanically, as if they were a response that had been learned generations ago, as if they had neither root nor branch in her own consciousness. Nor yet did she rebel. Her mother had come for her, therefore she must go. She was strangely passive. They were to leave in the afternoon at the same time that the witchlike mother-in-law had set, when the shadows grew long.

All day the nurses were in a whirl, running about getting things for A-doo, helping her pack up her small square pigskin box, thrusting presents on her, cooking her a specially savory meal at noon. San Me, her best friend, sat in her room and talked. Just before parting time, San Me came to me.

"All is not well," she said. "Since you sent away the son and the mother-in-law, for one long month, the mother-in-law has sat in the door of her house, which is next the house of A-doo's mother, and has reviled her and A-doo. All the village has heard the words. She has said that A-doo is unfilial. She has said that A-doo has sold herself in the big city. She has said that, while her husband was in prison, A-doo has had a child. All the village has stopped to listen, the men and the women and the children. They gossip about it around their gateways in the cool of the evening. Many do not believe it, but some do. The mother-in-law of A-doo is a wicked woman, and the village fears her. When she was young she cast fortunes. When she does not sit in her gateway and talk to all the passers-by, she takes out her magic scrolls and reads them and laughs and mutters to herself. It is more than the mother can bear any longer. So she has come for A-doo, to take her home to confound the old witch."

"I will keep them both here," I said. "I will not let A-doo go back to be tormented."

"It must be," said San Me. "She cannot stay. She would lose face."

So I too acquiesced. I had raged and interfered and endeavored to prevent the fulfilment of a

Chinese destiny, and I was baffled. It was useless. The old witch had her way. A-doo was as if a spell had been put upon her. She neither spoke nor wailed nor objected. I went to her once again, but she shook her head. "It must be," she said. "I must go. It is my fate."

The whole hospital turned out to say good-by. But it was not a hilarious leave-taking. Every one was oppressed with the shadow of some disaster. San Me went weeping to her room.

"We will never see her again," she said.

"Nonsense," I replied, but I felt a sinking of my heart.

Weeks went by, and no sign came from A-doo. She had promised to write to San Me, but no letter came. At last San Me asked if she might not take two days off and go up the creek to see A-doo, spend one night with her, and come back the next day. San Me was a widow and so could be allowed more liberty than a young girl; moreover she was an older woman. I let her go gladly, for I had grown worried at the utter disappearance of A-doo. She had vanished as completely as if some monster had opened his jaws and swallowed her up. It had been a terrible month for me. What with my longing for Edward and my uncertainty as to his whereabouts, a thousand doubts of his love had crept into my heart to torment my days and nights. I knew quite well what I wanted; I wanted Edward back again. Then I was worried about A-doo. I reproached myself with having let her go too easily. So when San Me suggested that she go to see her I

was glad. I found the whole hospital had been worrying about her. The moment my permission was given the nurses broke into a thousand conjectures. I found their thoughts had been as busy with A-doo as had mine.

The two days that San Me was gone dragged along interminably. A deadly apprehension of bad news filled me, and the first sight of San Me confirmed it. She stumbled into my room, blinded with tears.

"What is it?" I asked. "Did you find her? Is she worse?"

"Yes, I found her," San Me answered. "No, she is not worse."

"Is she unhappy?" I asked.

"No," San Me answered. "She is not unhappy. She does not feel anything. Her heart has died. Her body is quite well. She is fat and her cheeks are pink, but her heart has died. She just sits in a chair and looks far away at the clouds, and smiles to herself. It is the mother-in-law. She has bewitched A-doo. She put a spell on her. By and by A-doo will wither away and die. She did not know me when I got there. The boat was very slow. I did not get there till it was already twilight. The old mother and A-doo were sitting on little stools in front of the door. Just next door sat the mother-in-law. I heard her voice a long way off. She was reviling A-doo. She called her terrible names. A-doo sat there, looking at the pink clouds and smiling to herself, as if she did not hear the words of the mother-in-law. Perhaps she did not hear them,

I do not know. But the mother heard them. She sat embroidering a slipper, and tears ran down her cheeks. She has grown old and thin. Her skin hangs on her cheek bones as if it were a loose bag. She touched A-doo on the arm, and they went in. The mother-in-law, as if she had somehow triumphed in making them go in first, sat on reviling them aloud. A group of little boys stood about her, listening with eager eyes and open mouths. I slipped into their house by the back door, and the mother-in-law did not see me. It was terrible. A-doo was in bed, she did not know me. The old mother wept. 'She has been this way from the first week,' she said. 'Her husband came back and took away her money and beat her. He thinks she still has more money, and sometimes he comes back and beats her and beats her, but A-doo won't speak to him. He thinks she is hiding more money, but I have not seen it. I tell him he will kill her, and then how will she ever work for him any more. I tell him he is foolish, but he is filled with wind and will not see sense. When he has beaten A-doo, then he creeps through the mats to the house of his mother, and I hear them talking and whispering till late in the night.'

"I asked them both to come back in the boat with me, but the old woman wouldn't. She said it was fate. They would lose face if they ran away. In the morning before I left, A-doo knew me. She brought back her eyes from the clouds, and her soul seemed to return to her for a minute. She cried, and said she would like to come back to the hospital.

But then the mother-in-law came in, and A-doo's eyes went back to the clouds, and her soul was gone again.

"Oh! Save her! Bring her back to life! If she stays there much longer, she will die. I know. The witch will do it. This is not foolishness. I too am a Christian, but a power of the devil resides in some people. They are evil, and their thoughts, if they think of you, are evil and have an evil power to harm."

I went to the matron for advice, and discovered an item of news that astounded me. A-doo's husband had found a position as house boy in a family living near by, on Avenue Road. The matron had known it for a long time. An exhorting council was arranged — the matron, the Chinese minister, his wife who was a doctor, San Me, and myself. This, it seemed, was the proper Chinese way of appealing to the husband. He would not lose face if he yielded to such illustrious pressure. I wanted him to go home and bring A-doo back to the hospital and make his mother stop her public reviling. The council was arranged for the next day. I had given a promise that the meeting was not a trap, that no police would be called, that I would allow the husband to go as freely as he came. Wang S Moo, San Me, and I arrived at the guest room of the minister's house first. Mrs. Lok greeted us and led us to our seats. The minister soon joined us, and we sat around the room in silent formality. A strange company we were and on a stranger errand. In the center of the room was a small marble-topped table.

On opposite sides were two stools. Wang S Moo and Mrs. Lok talked in subdued voices. Mr. Lok was to be the spokesman; we were simply to lend our presence. The husband, accompanied by a friend, arrived very promptly. The man looked around furtively as if still fearing some hidden treachery. Mr. Lok motioned him to one of the stools at the center table, and he took the other. Then began the exhortation. It was a scene I shall never forget. Like silent images, we sat around the walls of the small room, our eyes and ears focussed on the arena, on the figure of the minister and the thief. Very graciously and suavely Mr. Lok began his exhortation. My ears followed his words with feverish attention. Like the muffled roar of a far-off waterfall, the tones of his words rose and fell. Graphic, subtle, conciliating, the man pleaded that the thief husband allow his wife to come back to the hospital. Did he not know all in the hospital were the friends of A-doo? Had she not worked with us for ten years, years during which time he himself was unable to care for her? Was not the foreign house like an adopted home to her? Were not the foreigners like adopted parents to her? We would cherish her and restore her to health. If, when she was well again, he wanted her, then that would be an affair for them to settle together, but now, while she was sick and in danger of losing her mind, now was the time to confide her to the care of the foreigners. On and on he went. It seemed impossible to me that any one could withstand such an appeal. But the husband did.

It was true, he said, the foreigners were good to his wife, but it was also true that she had contracted this mortal sickness while working like a servant in their hospital. He did not find it fitting for his wife to work as a servant. He had heard the nurses were forced to do the work of amahs. No, it was not fitting for his wife. Moreover the new doctor was fierce and had spoken very fiercely to him. How did he know she would be good to his wife?

I was hot with rage and disappointment and chagrin. I also accused myself of my former domineering manner. If I had only been soft-spoken! Now he had me at his mercy. But Mr. Lok made light of his argument. He painted my character as a dove of peace, fierce only in the defense of her children. On flowed his words, but now I had ceased to listen. Instead I watched the face of the thief. If he should not yield, I determined to see if a prison might not again be found for him. I knew there were crimes enough to commit him, for Wang S Moo had just been telling me of the disappearance of silver, piece by piece, in the house where he was at service. I hated him; a personal spite filled me with a startling, strong emotion. He was vile, and he was balking me.

Our words were wasted like water thrown against a wall. Mr. Lok and the thief, polite to the end, talked on. The man had no idea of yielding, and I wondered why he had come. I wondered if we should have offered him money. Of course we could not have done it, but still I wondered. Finally I got up and left. I could not sit there and watch him

any longer, smiling and smiling like a villain. Wang S Moo said he promised to write to his mother-in-law, telling her to urge A-doo to come back. "If she does not come," the husband said craftily, "it will be because she does not wish to. She is quite free. I would not force her to anything. Did she not go of her own free will? I did not send for her, I did not urge her. If she wants to come back she will come, but I do not think she will come.

He must have gone home satisfied with his revenge. I cried myself to sleep and sent out a piteous telepathic message into the void air for Edward. I needed him in my work; I was thwarted by a Chinese thief! I wanted some one ruthless and strong to come to my rescue, to thrust the man out of my way. I wondered, whether A-doo too was crying? But no, San Me said she sat and smiled at the clouds.

A week went by, but no word came from A-doo, no word came from Edward. Doctor Donnellon was still away, but Miss Laurie was back. I could stand it no longer. I left the hospital in her care and set off up river with San Me for the home of A-doo. We started late in the day, so that we should arrive unobserved and unheralded in the dusk. The village was but twelve miles distant. The evangelist had lent us her house boat, in which she made her preaching trips, and her boatman. The man was a Christian and had long been a trusted servant of the mission. If we brought back a kidnapped woman with us on our return trip, he would make no demur. Such was my plan. We

would arrive after dark, San Me would lead me to the home of A-doo, I would persuade one or both of them to come back with me, and we would creep back to the boat at once. It was a very simple plan, but my heart misgave me.

San Me busied herself in the cabin of the little boat. The boatman swayed back and forth with his oar. Out from the tangle of houses we slipped, out past the silk filatures of Chapei, past the village of Zau Ka Doo, where the house boats were moored along the shore, and the willows trailed their branches in the brown water, past the compound of the mission school and college at Jessfield, where the foreign houses were half hidden among the tall palms and cryptomeria of the campus, past the ferry stones and the flat-bottomed ferry, out into fields. It was already twilight. A lantern dangled at our prow and our stern. The current swished around the curves of the shore and beat against the side of the boat in a gentle gurgle. Past us, like huge bats with outspread wings, brown-sailed junks floated down with the tide to Shanghai. A carriage with two occupants galloped along the shore. A man began to whistle merrily; the gay western tune mocked the silent stealing river. At the customs station, the custom boat was alight with lanterns, and sounds of laughter floated out over the water. Soon we were beyond the noises of gaiety. Gray-brown, misty, the fields stretched away on either side of us. We passed the abandoned shrine with its ancient Buddha which we had passed the day Edward proposed to me, passed it and went on

farther and farther into the country. Through the mist of the fields, here and there, rose a hedge of bamboo and cypress like an Indian stockade, surrounding a group of clannish homes. A dog would bark suddenly and as suddenly fall silent. In about two hours, lights appeared along the edge of the creek.

"The village of A-doo," said San Me. "We will go to the steps behind her house, where her mother washes the rice, and moor the boat. Alas, that the house of the mother-in-law is next door! It will be necessary to be very quiet. If she is sitting out in front reviling, perhaps she will not hear us."

Like phantoms we glided over the water and moored at the foot of the ancient stones. I waited while San Me went in to reconnoiter. With her shoes in her hand, she tiptoed up the stone steps and vanished through an open door. I stood on the lowest step and waited. No sound of voices filled the evening. The village seemed to have gone to sleep. We were later than I had calculated. A spice of danger tingled through me. We had come like thieves in the night. A bird called suddenly from a tree and I trembled. Then San Me came back, followed by the old mother, and we crouched on the boat and talked in whispers.

She refused to slip away now. She said A-doo would not come in the dark. She said that if they slipped away now, in the dark, they would lose their home and could never come back again. She was afraid. Then she invited us to spend the night with her and make an open visit. She said it would give her face in the eyes of the village.

"What shall we do?" I asked San Me.

"I think we should do as she says," said San Me. "If she and A-doo will not steal away with us now, at once, it is useless to try to take them. To do anything secretly, we must have their consent. So then, the next best thing is to stay, and make them an honorable visit."

I consented. We walked boldly up the moss-grown stones, chatting pleasantly. In the living room, A-doo already lay in bed. I went over to her, but she did not know me at all. In fact, I do not think she even saw me. She lay on her back with her eyes wide open and staring at the ceiling. I was shocked at the poverty of the place. It consisted of one earthen-floored room. At the back stood the charcoal cook stove. At each side of the room was a low bed. The mother brewed us a fresh cup of tea and set a bowl of rice before us. I said I was tired, and they spread me a fresh comfort on the opposite bed. I demurred, but San Me and the mother insisted.

"We do not want to sleep," they said. "We can sleep any night. Tonight we will talk."

I was tired, and in spite of shuddering as I lay down on the strange bed, I went right to sleep.

A faint blue light filled the room, seeping in through the lattice work of the wooden doors in front and through various, unobserved chinks in the walls and floor. In its grayness, the hut looked poorer and meaner than by candlelight. San Me and the mother were gone. In the bed opposite I saw the inert figure of A-doo. While I lay there, half awake

and unmoving, a stealthy noise caught my ear. I wanted to turn my head to look, but by a strong effort of will, I lay still and closed my eyes, all but a crack between my eyelashes. Behind me, the soft stealthy sounds crept on. A board creaked. I saw a small stooping shadow on the opposite wall. The shadow vanished on the ceiling, and the figure of the mother-in-law appeared, standing at the bedside of A-doo. Quite motionless the figure stood there. I only saw its back. It bent, and I saw a thin hand shoot out and disappear under the bedclothes. The witch kneeled down on the boards and bent over A-doo, searching, searching. A-doo slept on. Did she sleep as I slept, with a crack of pale gray dawn between her eyelashes, or did she sleep a sodden, dreamless sleep that felt not the searching hand beneath her body. Five, ten minutes, the hand searched the bed of A-doo, softly, gently, insistently. Baffled, the figure arose and crept about the room, peering into every cranny, and feeling, feeling everywhere with her searching hand. Under the cold stove, on the dressing stand, in the drawers, in the dark nooks on the floor, at last the searching hand came to the curtains of my bed. Through the crack of my eyelashes I saw the sudden start of horror that spread over her face when she recognized me. As if frozen the mother-in-law stood with the curtains in her hand, looking at me. My eyes flew open, and I stared up at her. A sudden trembling shook her from head to foot. Her eyes fell away, and she ran out of the room.

A moment later San Me and the mother of A-doo

returned. Seeing me awake, they displayed the purchases they had made for breakfast. They were going to make me a feast and they had already invited the neighbors. The old mother hurried around as if burdened with no sorrow. A-doo seemed to waken from her stupor. She knew San Me and she knew me. A sudden look of acute comprehension lit up her face.

"Her soul has come back to feast with us," cried her mother.

Still with that uncanny look of acuteness in her eyes, A-doo bent down and pulled off a slipper. She held it carefully in her hands and ripped the stitches of the sole. The leather peeled off, as the skin of an orange peels off. Underneath, in a long smooth roll, lay ten ten-dollar bills. She took out one and handed it to me. "Make it into small change for me," she said, "so that the villagers and my mother-in-law shall not suspect. Every morning when my mother goes to market, she comes creeping in with the searching hand, feeling, feeling everywhere for my wealth. But she does not find it. No, she does not find it. Though I am asleep, I know when she comes, and my soul laughs."

A-doo sewed up the sole of the slipper again. The mother hid the change I gave her in a hole she dug in the ground under the wall just inside the kitchen. A-doo took a tiny, four-legged, wooden stool out into the sun and sat on it. I went out to talk to her, but already she had lapsed back into that slumberous state of stupor. Her eyes were on

the sailing white clouds, floating overhead like feathers against the blue, casting soft, gray-green, cloud shadows on the fields beneath. She was smiling to herself. One slipper, the slipper with the padded sole, kept time to a little tune she sang beneath her breath.

XIX

THE FLAMING WIND

FOR three days we had been having a typhoon. The wind, dry and dustladen, beat against the houses and sifted clouds of white dust through the windows and cracks. On the bare floors of the hospital the white dust lay like a carpet patterned with footprints. Every two hours the amahs mopped the floors. In the house I had shut my study windows. Then the heat choked me, so I opened them again, and the insidious white dust veils drifted back. Three days of it, and our nerves were on edge. That hot persistent, dust-laden wind does the strangest things to the human body. It takes the most calm, phlegmatic, serene person and turns her into a taut, quivering, jumpy creature full of whims and fancies. Nothing in nature has quite the same power that the hot, fierce wind of the typhoon has. It is like the prelude to a tragedy. All the patients were worse. The nurses were tired and worn out. I was ready to scream from nervous excitement.

In the afternoon, a call came from Pootung. A woman had fallen from a second-story balcony and had broken her leg. Her son and her husband came for me.

"You can't go to Pootung in this wind," said Miss Laurie. "It is dangerous to cross the river."

"No dangerous," said the son. "There are little waves, but we have a big junk. My mother lies in the courtyard with her leg doubled up under her, moaning with pain."

"I'll go," I said. "I don't mind a few whitecaps."

In the morning and for the past three days the sun had been shining brilliantly, its glare even brighter than usual. But in the afternoon a thin diaphanous film of cloud was slowly being drawn up over the heavens. It crept up the sky like a crawling mist. Its edges were blown out in banners and streamers of white. So transparent was this cloud that the sun still shone brightly, except that its terrible blinding glare was somewhat mitigated.

We set off in a little procession of three rickshas, I in the last. On the street swirls of dust were caught up from the roadside and eddied along in a mad, whirling dance. Our eyes were filled with it; even my tongue tasted dry and bitter. In spite of hatpins, I could not make my hat stay on my head, so I took it off and held it in my lap. The wind tore at my hairpins and scattered them in a little shower along the road. My skirts ballooned out about my feet.

The road was almost empty. Some of the houses had put up their wooden night shutters as a protection against the wind and dust. The occupants, sitting in the semi-dusk of the windowless interior, gathered around the open space where the last shutter had not yet been put up. In little groups

they peered out on the street and whispered among themselves. Now and then a coolie darted out on an urgent errand, or a baby toddled out and was snatched back. The town was demoralized. Business had come to a standstill. The groups in the doorways gazed at me with curious eyes. "She fears not," I heard them mutter.

They were right, I was not afraid. Unhappiness gives one a false courage. If Edward didn't come back and come back soon, I didn't care what became of me. Once and for all in the last two dragging months I had learned my lesson. I had not the vestige of a doubt left as to what I wanted. I knew that industry, work, were but pale fitful gleams against the burning warmth of motherhood and love. If only he would come back!

Nanking Road was also deserted. The race track lay like a white mat beyond. I looked up at the Grand Hotel. Its balconies were shuttered, and its awnings drawn up and carefully tied, but I suddenly had the eerie sensation of being watched from behind one of the closed shutters. The slats were level and horizontal, and through the slits I saw the dim outline of a white form. I knew I was being watched. A wild hope made my heart knock against my ribs. I was always having such attacks of hope. Sometimes a figure that looked familiar in the distance sent my heart into my throat, but when I arrived at the spot where I had seen the figure, I found no one. The garter, tying the left trouser of my runner at his ankle, came undone. Like a black snake it coiled and reared itself around

his foot. He stopped and tilted down the shafts. As I slid forward, half standing, my eyes fastened upon that shutter. I met a pair of eyes. Suddenly I raised my hand and beckoned to that hidden watcher. The coolie, fatally deft and quick, tied his ankle-strap and rushed off at double quick after my two guides. I turned to look back, but the shutter was still closed.

The usual crowd of rickshas and wheelbarrows was gone, as we sped down the smooth, asphalted street at a marathon speed. At the jetty a little tilting rowboat was waiting for us. Its yellow eyes were bulging on each side of the prow, and the stern tilted up in the air like the poop of an ancient galley.

"I thought you had a big junk for me," I said, hesitating.

"This is a big junk," they said.

I got in. Perhaps it was just as well that we had no sail. I saw one house boat with a tall brown sail go tearing past like a runaway boat, the men on her sitting on the gunwale, grinning. They seemed to like it. Along the shore a host of craft were moored — rafts, junks, house boats, steam launches, and foreign white-painted, white-sailed cat-boats. The plane trees on the bund and in the garden made a noise like violin strings, as their leaves whipped back and forth and up and down in the wind. On the water the waves leaped up in white spray, hiding the brown stream. Our futile cockleshell danced up and down. Half the time the oar was out of water.

"Can you swim?" I asked the son.

"No," he said. "Why should I swim?"

"For your life," I thought. I could swim, but in spite of that comforting fact I seemed more perturbed than the Chinese. Little by little we got across, not so much by rowing in a steady direction, as by a series of hops and jumps. The Pootung shore was crowded with house boats. A regular fleet of junks clustered along the shore. The tobacco factories, the great silk mills, and the godowns of tallow and opium rose in a black shapeless bulk along the water front. They were a modern barrier to the ancient pastoral life beyond, life that persisted unchanged from the days of Abraham till now, life that would persist forever and ever. The streets were dark and empty, but from the whirring of a million spindles I knew that this subtle, upsetting wind had not stopped the wheels of modern industry.

The thin, diaphanous veil of white cloud had spread over the entire sky. Layer after layer of filmy mist had deepened its white to a soft gray, through which the sun barely filtered like pale moonlight. Twilight had fallen early in the afternoon. I felt that the mills ought to close, that they were working on into the night, in defiance of the menacing change in nature. Inhuman, regardless of the signs in the heavens, they held captive their throngs of women and children. I looked in quickly through the windows and saw the revolving spindles and the workers moving mysteriously among the machinery.

The town was but a thin wall along the river front, and we were soon out in the fields. A short

ride brought us to a neat house of plaster and thatch, standing in a grove of young bamboo. They bent over, touching their frond-like tips in a deep kowtow to the ground. Out here, on the edge of the plains, the wind met us with augmented force, sweeping up from out an inferno of torrid heat. My skin was parched and dry. I wiped my face off with my handkerchief. The linen was covered with a fine dry gritty sand. Around the house the chickens and dogs had found shelter within the courtyard.

The old mother was in a pitiable condition. While the men were gone, her daughter and her daughter-in-law had managed to get her to bed. They had slipped a shutter under her, and so had lifted her from the ground and carried her up to her room, Her leg was horribly twisted. She had been leaning on the railing of the second-story balcony when it had suddenly given away and she had fallen headlong on to the flagging of the courtyard.

"The sleeping medicine," she moaned.

I gave her some whiffs of chloroform and set her leg. I also attended to five or six bruises upon her body. It took me in all about an hour, and in that time darkness had descended over the land. In the blackness without, neither sun nor moon nor stars were visible. In the house they lit a few candles which were continually going out in a sudden draft.

I went to the door and stood a moment before starting back, looking out over the fields and listening to the roar of the wind. As I stood tilted for-

ward, leaning against it, it was like a tangible support.

Finally stooping in the face of the wind, I set forth. The father and son accompanied me. When a great gust came whirling down the narrow alley, they steadied me by my elbows. The whirring of the machinery in the mills told me it was not yet six o'clock, yet it seemed like midnight. People ran here and there, in a sudden feverish activity, doing their last errands for the night. At the boat, the father and son left me, and the oarsman pushed off. That crossing was as the crossing of the river Styx. I could not see the water; I only felt its turbulent tossing, as hither and thither we danced. The spray wet my face. The wind redoubled its fury, and my hair streamed out behind, giving me the strangest sense of adding to the motion and the blackness. We seemed to make no headway at all. I could just distinguish the figure of the oarsman flinging his weight on the rope of the oar at each stroke. At each recoil he sang a low musical note. The river was alive with a hidden flotilla of boats. Now on one side, now on the other, came the call of the rowers.

Suddenly the Stygian blackness was rent with flame. A godown at the very edge of the water spouted fountains of yellow light. The wind caught the flames and wove them in and out in a fantastic pattern. Like rockets and meteors of red and gold, the flames melted into the blackness of the tempest. The shore was alive with shouting. We heard a great splintering of wood, and, suddenly, streams of

liquid fire ran out on the water and spread over it. From the burning streams great mountains of fire towered into the air.

"The tallow factory is burning," said the rower. "See how the fire dragons live on the water."

Fascinated, forgetful of any personal danger, the rower stopped working, and we drifted. From the godown on the shore great fiery waterfalls of yellow and red, of purple and green flame, poured out upon the water. This molten mass of burning tallow rushed out on the water as a mass of lava, turning the blackness of the water into a river of fire. Pieces were torn loose from the mass by the typhoon and hurried away in burning islands. The whole river was aflame! In this flaring light, Shanghai was illumined in a silhouette blackness. The wind tore off molten pieces of tallow and carried them in flaming balls of fire high into the air. On the shore the sound of people screaming filled the night. Other buildings sprang into flame. Blackness and flame, the screaming wind, the tossing water!

I was afraid. It was like the end of the world; it was hell let loose upon the earth.

A sudden tongue of flame wriggled our way on the water. The Chinaman began to row frantically. Near us, we saw a junk caught and encircled with the burning tallow. The wood of the junk caught on fire, and the flames rushed up the sails. Frenzied shrieks rent the air. The boat and the burning tallow bore down upon us, and I expected to be engulfed in a moment in the ever-burning, relentless

river of fire. Then the wind veered. The tower of flames drifted past us, and we were safe for the moment. The whole river, from shore to shore, was a mass of leaping, spreading flames, through which the black water showed like little pathways. I watched the wind catch up a flame and twist it and toss it into aërial, fairy shapes of wonder and glory. On the shore the fire swept along in unchecked triumph.

By some miracle we reached the other shore in safety. On the steps of the jetty stood Edward. He picked me up in his arms and whispered things in my ears that I shall never forget.

XX

THE RIVER OF SILENCE

IT was the day after the Great Typhoon, at least so the world of Shanghai counted. For me it was the day after Edward came back. All my doubts, all my fears were swept away when he gathered me into his arms, and a great peace enveloped my soul. In the night the wind had increased a hundredfold. We were all sleeping in our row of cots on the second-story porch, when suddenly my covers were whisked off me. I sat up in bed just in time to see them disappear into the darkness like the sudden spreading of a ghost's wings. The bamboo blinds began to flap wildly. At the end of the porch, one tore loose from its moorings and beat against the ceiling and the floor in a wild tattoo.

The rain came down in torrents. It swept in under the high roof of the porch and drenched the bed and our clothes and our hair. The night was pitch black. Something had happened to the electric lights, so that the house was in darkness. Some one lit a candle, but the wind blew it out with a derisive puff. In the darkness, with the rain soaking through our nightgowns till we were as wet as if we had been in bathing, we struggled with

the bedding on the cots, dragging in sheets and blankets and mattresses. My hair was loose and lying like a wet shawl on my shoulders. The chairs and the table blew over with a loud reverberation. The loosened blind flapped distractingly. The whole house groaned and shook with the might of the wind. Wet and shivering, like rescued swimmers, we stood in fearful groups at the windows, fascinated by the endless rush and whistle of the hurricane. Two more blinds tore loose. One was carried off bodily into the darkness, the other was torn in bits, and pieces of shredded bamboo like the scattered fragments of a shredded wheat biscuit were whirled hither and thither into the night. The sound of the flapping curtain distracted me. I put on a rain coat, tied up my hair, opened the door on to the porch, and went out.

"Be careful," called Miss Laurie.

She was too late.

The bamboo shade, in its swoop from ceiling to floor, hit me on the head and knocked me to the floor, half dazed. In one gust the rain had soaked me to the skin. My coat was torn off me, and sailed away into the raging space. The released blind tore to and fro over my head, hitting the ceiling with a terrific bang and swinging down to the floor, just grazing my head. Half of its length was gone. Momently it disintegrated. The outlines of the Chinese houses close behind were lost. The blackness was as impenetrable and formless as if I had been on the deck of the solitary surviving ship on the ocean. I struggled to my knees. Like a living

creature, filled with venom, and destruction, the wind bore me to the floor again. Crash! Crash! The night reverberated with sound. With a brisk cannonade, the Chinese tiled roofs fell in. On my hands and knees I crawled back to the French window. Miss Laurie opened it a crack and pulled me in. In that moment the wind also tore in and blew over the chairs and tables. The glass splintered into fragments and the wind rushed through the house. We managed to shut the wooden shutters. The servants came creeping in from the back quarters, frightened to death.

That night passed like an eternity. The others went to bed. I sat crouching at my one remaining window, not that I could see anything at all, but because I was fascinated by the force of the storm. I sat on a cushion on the floor and pressed my face against the windowpane. Again and again came the crash of falling roofs. Once, a piercing scream shot up into the night. It came right after the thunder of a falling roof, and a sudden shiver ran down my spine. Some one was hurt. The noise of wind was like a mighty trumpet, as it screamed and shrieked and bellowed through the black darkness of the night. It drowned the sound of the rain, which fell in torrents as from a waterspout. At last the darkness was tinged with a desolate gray. I saw the pillars of the porch rise into view before my eyes, and across the garden, the dim peaked roofs of the Chinese houses appeared like outlines in the clouds. The rain was driven over the earth in spouts of water, and the wind never ceased its

howling and rushing. I had a sudden vision of the power lying hidden in the veriest white fluff of cloud, power against which houses and bricks and mortar were as thistledown. I had a quick, mad desire to rush out and stand on the railing of the porch and spread my arms to the wind like wings and be carried off. In the gray darkness of the dawn I would be carried off, over the roofs of the city, out over the pathless plains, over the plains, over the rivers, up and up, to the hills! So swept the wind! Up from the hot south of Formosa, over the China Sea, bursting in rushing sound and falling water on the banks of the Yangtse! I felt part of it. I no longer wanted to be housed and protected. I wanted to cast loose from the cramping safety and merge myself with the typhoon.

Morning came with utter desolation. Every tree on the compound was uprooted and lay at full length on the grass. The third-story tuberculosis ward was a wreck. The Venetian blinds were wrenched from the window frames, tearing off long strips of wood. The tables and chairs were splintered. The patients had crept down in the night, dragging their mattresses after them, and slept on the floor in the ward below. There the ceiling had leaked, and great pools of muddy water covered the floor of the second-story ward. Out-patients, with heads cut by falling bricks, crowded to the clinic.

Edward came with news of the devastation in the settlement. Along the bund all the hundred-year planes were uprooted, carrying great slabs of

cement into the air. The entire house-boat population had been swept out of existence. The Whangpoo, the Soochow Creek, and all the little tributary canals were empty and bare of craft. Wires were down, and the settlement was without light and telephone.

The air was full of tingling life. The clouds were gathered up and folded away like the folds of a closed camera. The sun shone forth with a dazzling brightness. Every one laughed and sang. The coolies and amahs were busy clearing up the débris of the night. The usual routine of the hospital was demoralized. The regular clinic patients stayed at home, and by afternoon all the cut heads seemed to be bound up.

"Come, let's go for a walk," said Edward.

Off we went, through the settlement, out along the Jessfield Road.

We came to the house of the Wistaria Tower. It is a great, red-brick house standing in spacious grounds with a thick hedge of shrubbery along the outer wall. At one corner, a three-story, square, red-brick tower overlooks the road. Ancient wistaria vines, both white and purple, climb to the top of the tower. In the early spring the fragrance of the blossoms floats out over the land in an enticing smell. The fullest blossoms grow about the tower.

"Do you know the story of that house?" I asked Edward.

"No," he said. "Has it got a story? Never mind. I don't want to hear any story but how you managed to get along without me for so long."

"I didn't manage," I said. "You went away and left me, and I pined, but I am not going to talk about that; I am going to tell you the story of the Wistaria Tower. The other can't be told in the daylight, walking along the public road."

"Go ahead, then," said Edward.

"Well," I began, "once upon a time, long ago when Shanghai was a strange and dangerous place to live in, a young couple came out from England. The husband was in the tea business. They prospered greatly and, as his bride was fond of the country, he bought this house on Bubbling Well Road. Fifty years ago it was out in the wilds of the country. At first the husband and wife were very happy. Together they planted the white and purple wistaria and the daphne bushes and the bamboo grove. They had a little baby, and I think they were as happy as people ever are on this earth. Perhaps they were too happy or too forgetful. The husband became richer and richer. He grew fascinated with piling up money and more money. At night, when he came home from the hong, he sat silent at the head of the table, his head full of plans of how he could get more and more money. He didn't play with the baby any more. When, on Sunday afternoons, he and his wife rode out in their green victoria, he sat silent and preoccupied beside her.

"At first his wife was very sad. By and by she forgot about the time that he had loved her and that she had loved him. She fancied he had always been this absentminded person who only cared

about silver taels. But she was happy nevertheless, for she had her baby. Then one summer the baby died. For a week the husband forgot about his money and was tender to his wife, but he soon forgot all about her again. Day by day, she used to sit in her room and pretend the baby was just out for a walk with his amah and would come bounding in to her in a few moments. Her friends and her servants whispered among each other, saying she would go mad from grief. One of them spoke to her husband, and he sent for a doctor. Now this doctor was a young man, just out from England. He felt sorry for the wife and, by and by, he and the wife became good friends. There was no wickedness or sinfulness in their friendship. It merely brought warmth and happiness to their two empty hearts.

"One night, at dinner, the wife noticed that her husband eyed her strangely. After that he would come home at unexpected moments, or suddenly appear in the shrubbery if he heard the voices of his wife and the doctor talking. At first the wife rejoiced, because she thought her husband wanted to be friends again. But it was not so; he was devoured by a fiendish jealousy.

"Little by little it killed him. He left the strangest will. His wife was to be allowed only the income from his estate until she took his body home and buried it in a certain cemetery in England. When that had been done, she was to be given the principal. This principal was a huge sum of thousands and thousands of pounds. By this devise,

the husband had thought to separate her from the doctor. If she married again, she was to forfeit the entire fortune. After the will was read, the woman and the doctor met in the garden under the wistaria vines. It was springtime, and above them the flowers hung in purple and snowy cascades of fragrance.

"Don't leave me," said the doctor.

"'I must,' said the wife. 'I must go home with my husband's body, across the sea, to bury it in the old graveyard.'

"'Don't go,' he begged.

"'But I must,' she answered. 'If the body crumbles, I am penniless, and I do not wish to be penniless. I don't want to work.'

"'What do you want to do?'" he asked.

"'I want to do just what we have been doing in these last two years. I want to stay right here, where I used to be happy, where my baby used to play. I want to smell the wistaria spring after spring and have you come to see me.'

"A sudden light sprang up in the eyes of the doctor.

"'You shall do just exactly what you want,' he said.

"So he sent for skilled embalmers. For days and days they were shut in the room with the corpse. He went to see the lawyers and asked their opinion. 'As long as his body remains above ground she will have the use of the income,' they said.

"They sent for a mason, and the high tower was built. There, in the topmost room, they placed the body in all pomp and state. It lies on a great

marble bier draped with sumptuous silks. Strange spices fill the atmosphere. Once a week, every Friday, the mistress of the house says to the boy. 'Bring your feather duster. It is time to dust off Master.' Up they go, by the winding stairs, to the tower room, and open the closed doors. They open the windows on to the sweet smelling air, heavy with the fragrance of the wistaria, and the Chinese boy dusts off the light film of white dust that sifts in through the windows and lies on the face of Master. Then the mistress takes out fresh spices from a bag on her wrist and sprinkles them about the room of death.

"All that was fifty years ago, and she is an old woman now. She says she will never go back to England. She has again grown fond of her husband, of the face that smiles at her with its eternal calm from its sumptuous bed of silks and spices. Once a week she performs her ceremonial rite; she and the half-frightened boy climb the winding stairs to the highest room and dust off Master. But I wonder how often she secretly climbs up the stairs, perhaps in the dead of night, when the moon shines in pale patches of silver, or at sunset, when the rosy reflection of the sky tinges the white face of her husband with the glow of life, or at the clear cool time of dawning, when the crows fly back to the fields for the day. I can fancy her standing beside that royal bier, thinking thoughts that are sad and corroding, or quiet and serene. Whenever I pass the house, I wonder about her. Has her life been only one long contemplation of the dead?"

"What a dreadful story," said Edward. "I'll never be able to pass that house without thinking of her. Don't tell me any more such spooky tales."

The sun covered the fields like a golden carpet. The sky was a fleckless blue. In the tiny village of Zau Ka Doo women and babies were already sitting along the roadside, chatting. The shops were busy. Long strings of peppers and leeks hung from the ceilings. The destruction of the night before was almost cleared away. The shore of the creek was strewn with floating masts and upturned boats, but the children were fast gathering the wreckage for firewood. At Jessfield we wandered across the campus. The gardeners were busy at work with ropes and pulleys, hoisting the upturned trees back into place. The force of the wind had evidently not struck Jessfield with the violence with which it had hit the settlement.

Along the shore of the creek a group of children were throwing stones at a log in the water. They were all little American children, the girls in the dainty frills and lacy whiteness of clean afternoon dresses, the boys in stiff sailor suits.

"I've hit it twice," shouted Henry.

"I hit it too," said Mary. "I can hit just as well as you."

"Shucks! You just happened to hit it! Girls can't throw. Watch me hit it again."

Henry carefully searched for a smooth round stone, poised himself on one foot, and sent the little, twirling thing through the air. Plump, it landed on the log with a forceful impact. The sudden

thud made the inert brown log roll over. A sickening horror gripped us. Something white and lifelike stared up at us from the water. A swirl of the current caught the object. It flung an arm out on the water, and quite distinctly I saw a hand appear and vanish before the current rolled it back again. Once more it lay floating like a log, drifting up a little way and down a little way with the lazy current. I looked at Edward and saw the same knowledge in his eyes. I sent the children off home, for I did not want them to see the ghastly, drowned face turn again to the light. We walked along the shore to the ancient ferry above and got the ferryman to pole us downstream to the drowned man. Very slowly he was drifting down towards the ocean. The ferryman was scared and refused to touch the body. When we found ourselves alongside it, it was floating on its face, with arms and legs sinking downwards, leaving its khaki-clad body like a log on the surface. We drew it to the shore.

"A rebel soldier!" cried the ferryman in fear. "Do not touch him. Put him back again into the water. It is not good to touch the drowned dead."

"We'll bury the corpse," said Edward. "We can't let him go floating up and down the stream, to frighten the children out of their wits."

The dead rebel soldier lay on the grass with his white, shrunken face upturned to the sunset skies. Overhead the crows flew by, one by one, in twos and threes, back to their roosts in the shelter of the settlement for the night. The wide, level plains stretched off in the distance to the faint irregular rim of the

horizon. Grave mounds, little and big, forgotten and nameless, humped the fields. The meandering runs of water and the meandering footpaths went off towards infinity. From the road came the sound of the carry coolies. I could see them jogging along at their never-ending, tireless gait, singing again and forever the same song. A boatman went by, swaying slowly at his oar, calling out a low note at each stroke. He looked at us with curious eyes. Through the fields I saw a wheelbarrow, laden with a dozen women, go along one of the winding paths.

"I wonder where he came from," I said.

The ferryman had left us to ply his busy evening trade to and fro across the stream, carrying the workers back from the twentieth century into the days of yore, back from the silk filature to the rice fields and their earthen-floored huts of woven bamboo.

Edward stooped over the man, and ran his hand over his chest. "Ah! he was murdered," he said. "See, here is a great gash just over his heart. He was murdered and then thrown into the stream. Think how simple it would be, in one of those canal houses of Soochow."

"But why?" I asked.

"Why? Who can say?" said Edward. His hands were searching the body and the clothes. Suddenly he brought out a shining something and held it out to the light on the open palm of his hand. The setting sun caught the object and made it gleam like an emerald. I bent over it.

"Take it," said Edward.

I picked it up and held it in my hand. It was a wonderful jade ring. The stone was oval, of a deep spinach color and translucent. A light of its own burned within. The characters "Long Life and Happiness" were carved on each side of the stone. Like the imprisoned wonder and magic and hope of the greenness of spring, it lay in my hand and gathered to itself all the lingering light in the sky.

"He was an up-country man," said Edward. "Probably from Nanking. Can't you just see him looting, cutting off the women's earrings, and grabbing their bracelets and rings? In the three days' loot of Nanking, he revelled. All the hard and fast restraints of civilized life were cast to the winds. He could enter where he chose; he could take what he chose; he could do what he chose. Here is another gash on his forehead, under his shock of hair. He fought like a demon, and laughed when the women jumped down the wells at his approach. He stuffed his pockets full of loot and drank and was riotously happy. Then the tide turned; the rebels were ousted. Fearful of losing his loot, or of being caught with it on his body, he slunk away from the army and set out for home. Somehow he reached Soochow. There he entered a wine shop. The wine was hot and strong. The men around him ate and joked. He began his fatal boasting. He pulled earrings and bracelets from his belt pocket and spread them before the greedy eyes of the coolies. Soon they were fighting, swaying around and around the eating tables in a hilarious drunken mob. The rebel soldier was pinned against the wall. Behind him,

a window yawned over the canal. A long, gleaming dagger reached out and lunged itself into his heart. The sudden warm gush of blood staggered his enemies. They drew back with terror staring in their eyes. In a panic they ebbed away from their victim. Steadied by the wall behind him, undistorted with pain, and strangely aloof, as are those that die from hemorrhage, the rebel stared at the crouching, cowed mob. I can fancy him making one last defiant gesture, waving the marvelous ring in their faces, before plunging backward into the slow, silent, sluggish creek. The men, too frightened to follow him, slunk away one by one to their homes. Through the winding black canals, in the cold black night, the body floated till morning saw it out in the open fields. Unconcerned, it floated downstream, drifting with the eddying current, past the lighted house boats, past the brown-sailed junks, past the staring, stone Buddhas, past the low stone steps where the women washed their morning rice, floating like a log, as dead men float out to sea. Only the children, shying their smooth, round stones, stopped its seaward destiny. Through such wild bloody scenes, from such a high-born home the magic ring has come to you."

Edward stood up and put the ring on my fourth finger. I slipped my hand within my waist and drew out the pendant of jade that the Mandarin's Bride had given me, and I remembered the words: "There is no adventure without love. Love is the great Adventure."

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